

CHRISTIANITY

NOT *as Old as the* CREATION:

BEING AN

ESSAY

UPON THE

Original of *Divine Revelation*.

SHEWING

That RELIGION can only Subsist upon
a *Divine Revelation*.

Which may serve for

A SHORT but FULL ANSWER to
Mr. T--d--ll's Christianity, &c.

And to all our *Modern Despisers* of *Scripture*
Doctrine.

WITH AN

APPENDIX

Affectionately address'd to the YOUTH of
this AGE; to prevent, if possible, their
being debauch'd with Atheistic and Deistic
PRINCIPLES.

LONDON:

Printed for T. WARNER, at the *Black Boy* in
Pater-Noster-Row. 1730. [Price 1 s.]

CHRISTIANITY

Not as Old as the Creation;

BEING AN

ESSAY

UPON THE

Original of Divine Revelation.

BY

THE REVELATION can only be said upon
a Divine Revelation.

Which may serve for

A SHORT but FULL ANSWER to
Mr. T. A. W. Christian, &c.

And to all our Opponents of 20 years
Past.

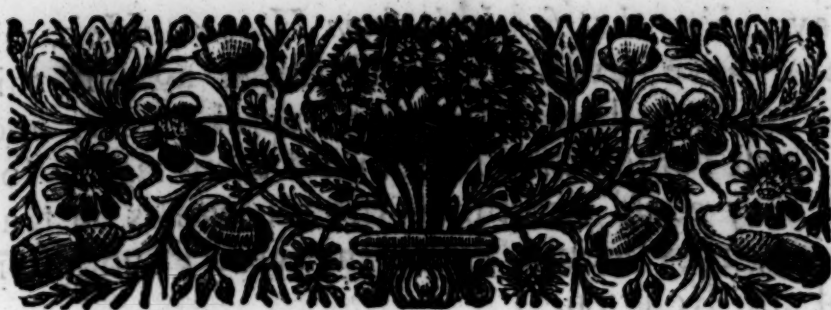
WITH AN

APPENDIX

Additionaly added to the Youth of
this A. G. R. to prevent, if possible, their
being debauch'd with Atheistic and Deistic
Pamphlets.

LONDON:

Printed for T. Warriner, at the Black Boy in
Pine-Street. 1730. [Price 1 s.]



A N
E S S A Y

U P O N T H E

*Nature and Original of Divine
Revelation.*

C H A P. I.

*Of the several Attempts, made by mistaken Men,
against the Establish'd Doctrine of Revelation.*



REVEALED RELIGION is a Fortification so strong, that it requires a very Numerous Artillery to beat it down, and such our Adversaries think they have prepared against it. We shall soon try the Strength of their Engines of all Sorts.

The Enemies of God, for such I must take all those to be who thus refuse, as the Scripture

B

says

says, *him that speaketh from Heaven*, Heb. xii. 25. have levell'd their Batteries against this Voice from Heaven in two several Places, and I must confess they have aim'd them right, for if they could overthrow the Outworks on that Side, they would shake the very Foundation of all Religion.

They have, I say, made a right Judgment on one Hand, namely, that this is the only thing they can do to overthrow the whole Scheme of our Holy Religion, and that it is in vain to attack us in any other Quarter.

But withal they have shewn the Weakness of their Skill, and that they could not see, that Reveal'd Religion (to carry on the Allegory) is impregnable; that it is impossible to shake the Foundation on which it stands; namely, the Sacred and Written Word; that it is a Building fram'd in Heaven, and out of their reach, of which Jesus Christ himself *is the chief corner Stone*.

Let us then look a little into the Pretences they make, for blessed be God they are no more than Pretences.

1. They at once reject all Scripture-Evidence. And this they think is a *Coup d'Eclat*, a mortal Blow; this they support, by raising innumerable Cavils at the Letter of it, the Diction, the Manner, the Translations, the Difficulties in the Reading, the Inconsistencies, which they call irreconcilable, and the like; by all which they would sink the Divine Authority of it. In a word, they *refuse him that speaketh from Heaven*.

2. They erect a Theologic Phantasm or Apparition, which they call by the Sacred Name

Name of Religion ; but very erroneously, and indeed by a direct Forgery. This is called by a new, and, till it was coined for this purpose, an unheard of, Name, *Natural Religion* ; which even, when call'd by its right Name, I undertake to prove, is in its plainest and best Construction, neither less or more than *Reveal'd Religion*, and that in its first, and for a while, clearest Revelation.

To this purpose then we shall, in its order, examine what this new Jargon is which these Men speak, and from whence deriv'd ; *Natural Light* they acknowledge, *Supernatural Light* they despise, *Reason* they adore, but *Revelation* they blaspheme : But, let them tell us, is not all Natural Light an Emanation from the Divine ? Let them shew us where Nature had any Light at all, and when had Reason any Powers, and from whence ? Were they not all from the Author of Nature, which is God ? Were they not all given from Heaven, which is Revelation, and nothing else ?

But they tell us they will distinguish between Inspiration and Revelation : Very well, let them try their Hands that way : Men are very fond of distinguishing themselves, not into good Principles but out of them, and take much more pains to confound Truth than to explain it : But we are ready to join Issue with them upon that Point also, and to prove the Identity of these Two, as far as Truth is capable of Evidence on Earth.

God having created the Carcase of a Man, for 'tis evident the Body was first form'd, breath'd into him the *Breath of Life* : There was Nature entirely form'd ; he receiv'd Life

from God; but it does not appear that this Natural Life had any Religious Powers till afterward, when Man became also a *living Soul*, which it is evident was subsequent to his Natural Powers.

Natural Power, which is no more than the sensitive Life, the Locomotive, and other Faculties in common with Brutes, could have no discovery of God, as we see demonstrated too often in the demented Carcase of a Man born an Idiot, inanimate or deprived of the Use of his Reason, which is the Soul; whether by any organick Impotence, or other occult Defect which Philosophy cannot account for.

Nature then has no Religious Powers, and to say *Natural Religion* is indeed to say nothing, or nothing to the Purpose; 'tis in short to talk Nonsense, a Jargon of Words without Meaning, like the Man of Nature himself without a Soul.

From Nature then, which is thus justly exploded in this Argument, we are led to talk of Reason, and this indeed has something in it to argue from; and were it not a faithful, loyal, and most obedient Subject to its Maker upon all Occasions, acknowledging its Powers to him, and recognizing willingly his just Right to lead and guide it; we might by this time have set it up as a Rebel against God, an Usurper of his Sovereignty, his Providence, and of his Government in the Souls of Men; and, in a word, made a God of it.

But Reason rejects the offer, and most cheerfully bows to its Maker; humble, obsequious, and in a most eminent Manner acknowledging that all its Powers are receiv'd by Inspiration,
from

from the Divine Author of its Being; This Inspiration is upon extraordinary Occasions improv'd, and its Light increas'd by new and glorious Discoveries of God, and of his Will and Works; and this is what we call Revelation.

That there is no room to receive these additional Discoveries and Improvements, and that Reason is at first, and at once, so fully enlightened, that God may not be able to add to its Powers by any subsequent Emanation, is too assuming for us to affirm.

That if there is room to receive them, it should not also be reasonable to do it, would be to set up Reason in the room of God, and erect two infinite perfect Beings in the World; which is blasphemous, and unworthy of God, and, as I said above, is rejected by Reason it self.

What then are these Men doing, while they teach Reason to speak a Language which she understands not, and arm her as a Rebel against her Maker, which she rejects and abhors?

And where will they now (*Archimedes* like) fix their Engine to remove this Globe? Nature is found weak and incapable, a meer Idiot, a demented inanimate Creature; a Ship without a Rudder, a Chaos truly dark and void; in a word, a Non-Entity as to Religion, having no Knowledge, no Faculties, no Light divine; in a word, no Soul.

As Nature has not the Power, so Reason has not the Will: Nothing acts against itself but it must have a Tendency to its own Destruction. If you will turn Reason to act

against, or in the stead of, its Maker, you lead it to destroy itself; all its reasoning Powers center in Almighty Power, and all tend to acknowledge and subject themselves to him.

This is demonstrated in that these reasoning Powers, on all Occasions, confess their own Impotence, and see a Necessity to acknowledge that there are Things yet to be known, which meer reasoning cannot lead us into the discovery of: To say our Reason is sufficient, is to abuse her, and make her say what she knows to be false: Reason's Light must be under some very great and almost total Eclipse, if she does not see a Darknes in herself, when compar'd with that glorious Light that is yet to be reveal'd.

As She sees beyond herself things not to be comprehended by her own Light, and not to be digested by her own Powers; so she earnestly searches into all the Discoveries which her Maker pleases to make to her of things otherwise invisible, and is most humbly obedient *to the heavenly Vision*.

This brief Fundamental destroys at once all the upstart Notions of the Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion: Reason itself bearing Witness to the Reasonableness, and even Necessity, of a further Revelation.

If then all our reasoning Powers are meer Revelations and no more, as is, I think, very clear; and if those very Powers acknowledge their own Deficiency and Imperfection, as they undeniably do, by the insatiable Thirst after farther Knowledge, which all Men find in themselves; then Reason certainly does confess

self the need she stands in of a farther Discovery, *and that is Revelation.*

As to Nature, or what we so weakly, I might say foolishly, call *Natural Religion*, 'tis quite out of the Question ; it seems to have no significancy at all in this Case, any more than it has in itself, which is just nothing at all, unless it may be made use of as the *Igni fatui* of Nature are by Fools to lead them into Bogs and Ditches, Ponds and Rivers, to their Destruction ; I shall therefore leave it entirely out of my present Consideration, and if it may be of any use to speak to and expose it farther, shall do it by itself.

We have then no Sceptical Enemy to contend with, but what is thus foolishly grounded ;

1. Upon *Natural Light*, which is wholly brutal ; and upon the Foot of which a Horse knows as much of God as a Man.
2. Upon the *Light of Reason*, which is in itself Revelation and nothing else ; and so is, in the Question before us, in reality nothing at all.

There remains then no more room to contest the Necessity of Revelation. *If Baal be a God let him plead for himself, since Men have thrown down his Altar.* Let then their Modern Deity, which we call REASON, stand up for itself ; the Dispute lies in a narrow Compass between Reason and Revelation, as they are now most Sceptically and Deistically understood by the *Free-Thinkers* of the Age ; and the same Reason and Revelation as they are

really in themselves, and as they are seen by their own Light.

If Reason is perfectly enlightned, if it has a self-sufficiency of Knowledge ; in a word, if it is infinite in Prescience, and incapable of farther Information, then Reason is God ; for whatsoever is Infinite is Eternal, *and that is God.*

But whence has Reason all this Illumination ? it must be communicated from some prior Being, which is yet more intelligent than Reason itself, or else it could not illuminate it at all.

This prior Being has communicated all the Knowledge it has itself, and then the Thing illuminated is made equal to itself ; and so Reason is erected, as before, into an Equality with Infinite, and is set up for a God ; or it has not communicated all itself, and consequently there remains yet something farther which may be communicated, *and this is Revelation.*

But granting that God may not have communicated all himself to our Reason, as I shall shew hereafter ; they tell us he has reveal'd so much as is sufficient for our use ; so much as is necessary to guide us to himself, and to Eternal Felicity, and that is all they plead for. This then brings the Question into still a more narrow Compass than before, for it remains only for them who affirm this, to prove it, and the Question is short. How does it appear that the Lights already given, or reveal'd to our Reason, are sufficient to our Eternal Felicity, and that there is no need of any farther Illumination, or, in a word, that our Reason is perfect in Divine Knowledge ?

If

If indeed this great Affirmative can be proved, they may be said to have gain'd a Point, and all the Discoveries of God in the Scripture, whether of the Old Testament or the New, are of no more Importance in the Case.

But whether will they go for Witnesses, for we must not be put off with Cavils ; things will not be demonstrated by Words : Here must be strong Evidence, and where will they find it ?

Reason is a Party, and cannot be brought for a Witness on their side : Besides, Reason is against them, as we shall see presently ; Scripture also is a Party ; whether then will they fly ? God and Man being thus directly against them. God and Man, I say, are against them ; that is to say, Scripture and Reason : The Scripture is loudly against them, and if Reason were admitted to speak, it would witness against them also. I explain my self thus :

REASON is against them ; for Reason openly confesses herself not fully enlightned ; this she does I say openly, by her constant assiduous Endeavours and unwearied Application after farther Illumination : *Reason* directs us openly to an incessant Search after Knowledge ; this I must take for a certain sign that she is sensible of her present Deficiency : It is the strongest Reasoning of its Kind in the World : That Reason is sensible of the Deficiency of her Powers, by her prompting the Minds of Men to encrease in Knowledge, and especially by her frequent Mistakes in the Pursuit of it. See my Lord *Rocheſter* upon this Subject in his Satyr upon Man.

Reason

Reason which fifty times for one does err !

If Reason was sufficiently illuminated, there would be no Mistakes committed by Men in following her Dictates ; as if she was perfect in Knowledge, she would be a God ; so, if she was sufficiently enlightned in the Case before us, I mean in Religion, she would be an infallible Guide. The contrary to both which we see most true, and that in frequent Examples.

So that Reason, which is the only Evidence the Deists and Free-Thinkers have to bring, to confirm their Sufficiency in Matters of Religion without Divine Revelation, is not only taken from them, and her Evidence made of no effect to their Cause ; but she is confronted, and brought against them as a Witness for God, which they can never stand against or resist.

Reason acknowledges she derives from above ; 'tis her Glory that she is Heaven born, and came down from God when he caused Man to become *a living Soul*, Gen. ii. 7. But she no where pretends to a Perfection of Knowledge, or a Sufficiency of Light ; but if she is askt, will, with all humility, say, in the Language of the Text, *it is not in me.*

If God is the Father and Author of our Reason, as doubtless he was, did he give it an Independence of Powers, so that the reasoning Creature had no more occasion of his Maker ; or did he place it in a Condition to be continually looking up to its Maker for farther Supplies ?

Supplies? The first is an Absurdity in itself, and would place the created Power above the Power creating, which is inconsistent with the Nature of the thing: But if God left this Creature, call'd Reason, in, and under a constant Subservience to, and Dependance upon himself for farther Lights; then God reserv'd it in himself to supply his craving Creature with such farther Emanations, and such other Degrees of Light, as should, upon any subsequent Occasions, be necessary to him; *and this is Revelation.*

Now this Revelation is necessary, or it is not necessary; if it is necessary, then our Reason is not sufficiently enlightned; and if it is not necessary, why does Reason her self search after, rejoice in, and depend upon, farther and more Illuminations? why do we so eagerly desire to know? why enquire daily after what we know not?

Certainly Reason is no infallible Guide in Religion: How many great Men have we seen endowed with the utmost Perfection of human Knowledge; yet groveling in the Dark, and producing the most monstrous Errors, and even Absurdities in the sublimest Parts of Science, and such as are best fitted for Contemplation? an undoubted Evidence that Reason is no perfect Rule, no infallible Judge in Religious things, seeing it is not even in Philosophy itself.

How then do we pretend to lead People from a written Word, in which the Mind and Will of their Creator is revealed, and refer them to that fallible erroneous guiding of the Creature Reason? a Creature who has no
Lights

Lights of her own, but what are deriv'd to her from the same Fountain of Light from whence all Divine Knowledge is revealed?

And how then do we pretend in Religious matters to depart from the Revelation of Gospel Light, and go back to that of *Reason*? which is itself nothing more or less than a Revelation, and differing only in this sad Circumstance; namely, that it is less clear, less perfect, and less intelligible; for doubtless in all Revelation the subsequent Light is the clearest, the last being an Explanation and Completing of the former; it is therefore requisite that it should be the most explicit, and fruitful in discovery of Things not fully reveal'd before.

Our Reason is frequently call'd an Emanation of Divine Light, and those People who are now idolizing it among us, frequently compliment Reason with this Title; but then the very same Reason dictates to us, that the Thing deriv'd is less than the Thing deriv'd from; that the Being created is less than the Power creating; and therefore at the same time our Reason bows her Head, and pays Homage to her Creator, confessing that she knows but in part, and that she stands in need of farther Communications of Light and Knowledge from the great Fountain of Wisdom and Knowledge, *and this is Revelation.*

If Reason guides us to look up to him from whose Light she receiv'd all her Lights, what are we doing who take upon us to direct People to look down from him who gave to Reason all her Powers, to that Reason who receiv'd them? as if Reason had receiv'd all that God
had

to her whence had to bestow, and that Heaven could add nothing to her former Illuminations?

Again, as Reason acknowledges to have receiv'd all her Powers from God, and looks up continually to him for a farther Emanation; so Reason most readily acknowledges it to be very just, that we should believe whatever the God of Truth shall please to reveal farther to us; for as, if the Scripture is proved to be the Word of God, it is highly reasonable that we should believe it; so if God is pleased to reveal any thing of himself to our Reason, which it was not capable of receiving before, nay, which it may not be capable of comprehending now, Reason agrees readily that it is just we should believe it; because God being himself essential Truth, ought to be believed upon his Word; and Reason submits that he who form'd the Power of Reasoning, and limited it by his Power, may justly be supposed to have yet glorious Truths to reveal, which tho' plac'd out of reach of her present Powers, yet it is reasonable for her to submit herself to, and to believe, because they are his who is the God of Truth and cannot lye.

It is also another Act of just Reasoning, that those Things which Reason itself cannot now comprehend, may yet be reasonably believ'd, and ought to be resign'd to, if they proceed from the Sovereign Hand and God of Truth; seeing it does not follow but that they may be capable of being comprehended even by our Reason itself, when farther enlightned, tho' at present they may seem inscrutable and not to be conceiv'd of.

Thus

Thus *Nicodemus*, when the New Birth was describ'd to him by our Saviour, stood at Gaze, and, as may be suppos'd, in a posture of Admiration, expressing himself thus, *How can these things be!* and thus also the Disciples themselves understood not many things which Christ himself had said to them, till afterward, at his Ascension 'tis said, *Then open'd he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures,* Luke xxvii. 44.

Reason waits at the Foot of her Maker to have her Understanding opened, that she may understand such farther Revelation as he shall please to make to her of himself; and with all possible Reverence submits to believe even all those Revelations he has already made, tho' not at present fully comprehended by her.

N. B. Tho' Scripture is not allow'd in Evidence, while we are arguing with those People, yet we may bring Allusions from Scripture History, as in the Case above, I shall establish the Authority of Scripture in its order, so as not to fear its being exploded by the Cavils of those Men on any Account whatsoever.

Thus far, in general, may serve as an Introduction to this great Truth, That there is a Necessity of Revelation.

C H A P.



C H A P. II.

That there is no Divine Knowledge among Men, but what began in Revelation, and that all that call'd Natural Religion is a Delusion, an Invention of Man, or rather of the Devil; for that Nature has no Knowledge of Religion, or of Divine Things.

IT is a Maxim in Philosophy, That meer Matter cannot act upon immaterial Objects. We have the same Maxim improv'd in Religious Things, (*viz.*) *That the Natural Man cannot comprehend the things of God*; the Reason of which, is added in the same Text, for they are spiritually discerned.

It is true, that by the Natural Man there, is meant the Unregenerate or Carnal Man, speaking in the Scripture Stile, yet the Metaphor is good still; Nature and Religion are Flesh and Spirit, and I as much wonder to see a Man of Learning, an Author of Fame, tell us of *the Religion of Nature*, as I should have done to have seen a Mathematical description of Nothing: He might as well have delineated the Religion of a Horse: For, as I have said, the Light of Nature is Sense and no more, and informs the Man no more than the sensitive Powers inform a Brute.

Let us therefore talk this Language no more, and, banishing the foolish Expression
from

from our Speech, bring it to what even the People who have made use of this Impropriety, would have us to understand by it, (*viz.*) The Light of Reason.

Another Impropriety I meet with, and which I must take notice of is, That when the Term *Natural Religion* shocks them, as it must do when they come to think of it, they tell us then of *Natural Reason*, which by the way is almost as absurd as the other, and more so as they make use of it in a Religious manner, (*viz.*) setting up this new invented Nothing in the room of Religion.

What can be more inconsistent than the Identity of Nature and Reason? whereas one denominates and distinguishes the brutal and sensitive Life, and the other the rational and superior Life: *Natural Religion* is an Absurdity in Divinity, and *Natural Reason* is the same in Philosophy; nor is this Observation useless, much less needless in the Case before us; but far from deserving the Name of a Cavil, it is an essential Objection against all the Religious Schemes of the Infidels of this Age, and overthrows two thirds of their whole Fabrick; for if Nature and Natural be first taken out of their Plea, the whole remaining part will stand upon a very tottering Foundation.

I must therefore be allowed to repeat so much of what is advanc'd in the former Chapter, for establishing the Foundation I am to lay, namely, that all Religion is a Revelation.

I suppose I am not here to dispute Principles; we all agree, That Man is a created Being,

Being, he, *that is* God, formed Man of the Dust of the Ground.

His Creation, as a Form or Body, was first in order of Time, it must necessarily be so; for he must be, before he could receive any addition to his Being.

His Form being created, by the same Author of Being he then receiv'd Life, and with that Life a Soul: This Soul receiv'd Powers, or Faculties, call them as we please; these Powers consisted of Understanding and Will; the first contain'd a Fund of Reveal'd Knowledge, with Powers of judging, that is reasoning and determining of its proper Objects, as well superior as inferior, and the last contain'd a directing Power of Action.

All the Light which the Man was made capable of, came in at this Door, from the Knowledge of ordinary Objects, to the Knowledge of the most sublime: By these Powers he was capable of acting upon immaterial Objects, which as a Form, or meer Being, he was not: By these Powers he was made capable of reflecting, ruminating, judging, and understanding Things without, and above, himself; capable of acting upon Futurity, and upon Spirit, in a very extraordinary manner.

Nature had no manner of Concern in this, other than her organick Powers might be made subservient; the Soul having an arbitrary and absolute Dominion in acting by their concurrence and assistance in things only reserv'd to their Operations.

As Nature had no Powers in the ordinary Operations of Life, till animated by the Soul,

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but was a meer Carcase; much less can it have superiour Powers, which may be so much as named with the Subject we are upon: It is therefore the greatest Absurdity in the World to talk of *Natural Religion*, and it would sound as well to say a Religious Horse, or a Religious Bull, as a Religious Man, demented and stript of his Soul, suppose it were by Idiotism, Disaster, or any organick Defect.

It is wonderful, that in this knowing Age, this vulgar Error should take such footing among us, as to be taught in our Schools, and that the just Distinction should not as readily force its way into our Thoughts, as the gross way of talking on the other side; which must be shocking and unsonorous to the Ears of Men of Judgment.

To talk of *Natural Religion*, and *Natural Reason*! they are such Inconsistencies, in and with themselves, that it is surprising how Men of Parts and Learning can Account for them; for tho' it may be suggested that we know what they mean, and that they mean nothing but the *Religion of Reason*, and the reasoning Powers in Matters of Religion just as we do; yet, I must say, it is generally expected that Men of right reasoning should argue always in Propriety, and not make use of incongruous Terms, that they may not lay themselves open to such material Reflections, and be at least charg'd with talking unintelligibly.

Nor will it be sufficient to those Men to say, they mean nothing, but, as above, the reasoning Powers of Man, as they are given him with his Life, and are therefore called, with a general Acceptation, by the word *Natural*;
ral;

ral; for as there is an essential Difference between the sensitive Life, and the rational Life in the Man, so there must be observed in all the Discourses upon that Subject, a clear Distinction, and it must run thro' all the Arguments which are made use of upon the same Head; whereas on the contrary, this Absurdity runs through all their Arguments, and through all their Discourses; nor is that all, but in all those Discourses they talk of *Nature*, and the *Religion of Nature*, as if all Religion was really the result of meer Natural Powers, and that Man would have form'd Ideas of God and Religion in his Mind, whether God had added to him a living Soul or no.

Nature is delineated as if it had itself been a free Agent, capable of knowing, and of adoring the Being that made it; and as if the share of such Powers which it had, was such as to be sufficient to its future Happiness, and that Reason and the Soul had no Concern in it. 'Tis true, they do not say so in words at length; but the whole Tenour of their Discourses strongly imply so much, and their Scholars and Pupils are ignorant enough to *speak it out, not knowing* how to distinguish themselves out of the Absurdity, how gross soever it be. And this it is which makes the Observation necessary at this time.

From the Term Natural Religion, as I said above, we are brought on to another Absurdity, almost as gross as the first, and that is *Natural Reason*, an impropriety of the same kind: If it should, in behalf of the Senses of those Men, be insisted on that they do nowhere use these Terms, and so the Fact, should

be deny'd, I think I ought to bring some Evidence of the Fact in view, to anticipate such an Objection; and tho' I might, for this purpose, quote the very Term from several Authors who set up to defend the Thing itself, I chuse to take it from an unquestion'd Authority, where the Thing is charg'd upon them in Fact, without any addenda of Observations upon it as an Impropriety; this is from the Second Pastoral Letter of my Lord Bishop of *London*, to the People of his Diocese, publish'd just at the writing these Sheets: His Lordship's Words are these;

“ The Infidels of this Age (says my Lord)
 “ are endeavouring to lead Men into a disre-
 “ gard of all Revelation, by magnifying the
 “ Strength of NATURAL REASON.

It is true, as above, that his Lordship does not animadvert upon the Impropriety of joining the Word, or Epithet, *Natural* to the Term *Reason*; but it is to be observ'd, to the Credit of his Lordship's politer Language, that in his Answer to this Objection, as stated by them, he all along speaks of *Reason*, abstracted from the Word *Nature*, and taking notice of the Thing as it really is, an establish'd Power of thinking, and of judging of Religious Objects; but with no relation to the Powers of meer indigested Nature, he goes on to argue against their corrupt Usage of the Thing, with a strength of reasoning peculiar to himself.

This demonstrates, that with Men of Learning and Judgment, the Distinction is just; and I think, if right speaking be regarded, we shall not hear much more of their Natural Religion,
 or

or Natural Reason, the Religion of Nature, and the like.

We are then to bring it all down to its proper Original, which is *Reason*; this they would set up now against Divine Revelation, and insist, that this Reason is fully and sufficiently illuminated, and is the best, and most infallible, Guide in all Religious Cases: So that, in a word, there is no need for us to look any farther, and that all Inspiration, and all Knowledge of Divine things by immediate Revelation, is wholly needless, obsolete, and of no import at all in our inquiry after Heaven.

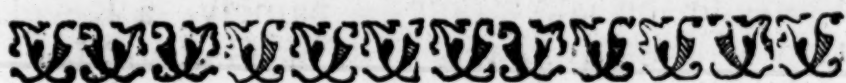
But we shall find upon inquiry, that they have led themselves into as gross an Absurdity this way as the other; and that Reason's self-sufficiency is a piece of mock Philosophy, that has nothing regular in it; for that, however great this sufficiency of Reason may be in itself, 'tis yet not at all from itself; but is all Exotic, receiv'd from a superior Hand, from a Power without herself, influencing and furnishing all her Faculties; and this I insist is Revelation, and nothing else.

Reason, says an old fashion'd Writer, is God's Candle in the Soul of Man; but that very Notion leads us immediately to ask, who first lighted that Candle, and whose Fire at this time illuminates it? Whence did it receive its first Light? And how came it by a capacity to receive farther Illuminations? Reason's Light, indeed, is antient, for 'tis as old as the first Breath by which *Man became a living Soul*; but this does not authorise us to say, or to suggest, that it is older than Revelation; but that it was really itself a Revelation: As it stood

at first upon that Foot, it stands still upon the same Foot, and we have only to inquire, as is said above, whether that first Revelation was full and sufficient to Man, to make himself be his own infallible Guide? an Inquiry, which will afford us an abundant variety of Speculations, all very useful in their Places, and of which we shall have room to speak at large as we go on: In the mean time, it will cause us to give an assent in part to the Letter of what a late Author has published, tho' perhaps not at all in the Sense he design'd it, (*viz.*) That Christianity is as old as the Creation; seeing Christ was reveal'd to the Reasoning Powers, tho' not to the Natural Powers, even of *Adam* in Paradise, and was immediately promis'd as a Redeemer as soon as *Adam* had fallen into Crime.

And this very Thing supports, not the Justice only, but the Force of the Distinction I make between the Religion of our Reason, and that unsignifying Thing, call'd, the Religion of Nature; for, it is not a Distinction without a Difference; the Infidels we are to talk with, have made the Distinction just; for this Religion of Nature, and this Natural Reason, they would make a kind of Light which Man is master of, by they know not what independant Power, as a Consequence of his being, not as a Gift from the Bounty of his Maker; whereas Man's reasoning Powers are all eminently deriv'd from the Divine Benevolence, bestow'd in a supernatural way, namely by Emanation; they have also a tendency to Loyalty and Obedience to that God from whom they do proceed, and upon all Occasions recognize

cognize the Power bestowing them, looking up to him for the continuance and encrease of his Gifts, and this will necessarily be the Subject of the next Chapter.



C H A P. III.

That Reason itself is a Beam of Divine Light, issuing from God himself, inspir'd at first with the Soul of Man, and continu'd since by additional Inspirations from the same Power, which first, as well as all the subsequent Inspirations from Heaven, by which his Soul is farther enlightned, is nothing more, or less, than a Divine Revelation.

INSPIRATION and Revelation, are so far Synonymous Terms, that the Difference seems to lie not in the Thing, so much, as in the common Acceptation of the Terms, which have been understood thus, (*viz.*) That Inspiration seemed to regard the ancient Prophets, and the manner how God inspir'd them from Heaven with a Spirit of Prophecy, for foretelling things to come, and these were call'd inspir'd Men, and Men of God, as likewise the Apostles, and first Fathers of Christianity, who were inspir'd with the Holy Ghost.

Revelation seem'd to regard the Matter which they were inspir'd with, which was afterwards made the Subject of their teachings and preaching to the World, in which they are said to

declare the Mind and Will of God to Men, as well in particular, as in general Instructions, Warnings, Exhortations, and the like.

But abating this publick or common Acceptation of the Words, we shall find they all issued in the same Thing; namely, a Revelation of the Mind and Will of God to Men.

I believe no Man will contend, that God did not reveal himself, and his Mind, and Will, to the first created Man, over and above all the first inspir'd Gifts with which his Soul was endow'd: I doubt not but the Soul, with all its Endowments, was as compleat in *Adam*, as I believe was ever communicated to any of his Posterity, even to this Day; and yet we find several farther Revelations of the Mind and Will of God made to him in Paradise, and perhaps afterwards, all which we must suggest were needless and impertinent; or we must allow that the first Revelation, or Inspiration of his Reason, was not intended to be sufficient.

If *Adam* had a fully inspir'd Soul, what need was there of a reveal'd Law? what need farther Commands to be laid upon him? his Original Lights were as sufficient Guides as any Man has come into the World with since; for they were all from God, and that immediately by Inspiration, which is the same thing as Revelation; yet 'tis apparent, that his Inspiration was but a partial Degree of Knowledge in divine Things, and that he was to receive farther and farther Discoveries of God by the same Hand, and by the same Manner, namely, by Revelation.

If

If then all the Knowledge, which the Soul of Man was at first inspir'd with, was a Divine Revelation, how do we come to distinguish ourselves into new Notions of the Original of that Knowledge, as if it came some other way? The reasoning Powers are all from God, all breathed into Man with his *Soul*, all Divine Knowledge, and the Power to use it and encrease it, was thus *reveal'd* to him, and all the Addenda of that Knowledge are by the same Method; namely, by a *farther Revelation*.

The Force of this way of arguing shews itself to be undeniable; because as it is impossible the Nature of the Man should receive any Impressions of Religion at all; so it is equally impossible the Soul of Man should receive them by any other way, than as a Revelation from that supreme Being, from whence, alone, all Divine Knowledge must derive.

This the Author of that monstrous Mass of Absurdity, call'd *Christianity as old as the Creation*, is oblig'd to come into, at his very first launching upon the Ocean of Error, which we see him plung'd into, *Page 3*. his Words are these: "*Natural Religion* differs not from *Reveal'd*, but in the Manner of its being communicated, *the one* being the Internal, and "*the other* the External Revelation.

And what is this now but *Inspiration* and *Revelation*, which as I observ'd above, are one and the same Thing? And how are the worst Infidels, by the meer Necessity of their own reasoning, however wickedly design'd, brought to recognize the very Thing they would explode: But, to evade the Consequences of it, they at the same time, commit a second Error

ror, worse than the first; namely, they insist that the first Revelation is perfect, and that all farther *Revelation* is needless and impertinent; by which they impeach the Wisdom of God for giving, what they call, an imperfect Revelation at first, or confine and restrain the Almighty from giving out any farther discoveries of his Mind and Will to Mankind, than what he at first thought fit to communicate to him; all which are arrogant and assuming in the highest Degree.

For the first, we grant, that it was a most righteous and perfect Law which God gave to Man, at the time that he gave him a living Soul; it was certainly a Revelation of so much of his Mind and Will, as was sufficient to his eternal Felicity, and to all that God required of him, at that time: But 'tis as certain, that there were many things, which were needful to be discover'd to him after his Fall, which he was not able to have known, or comprehended before: If not, then *Adam* had a certain full understanding in his Soul, of the universal will of God, both relating to his present, and his subsequent Circumstance of Life, the very Moment he became a living Soul; which, as it is not reasonable to believe, so it is impossible to prove.

It was enough that *Adam* had an immediate Knowledge of every thing which God, his Maker, thought needful for him to know at that time; and sufficient, if he had pursued it, to have directed him to a perfect Obedience to God's Law: Besides which, he had a capacity of Soul to receive such farther degrees of Knowledge by Revelation, or otherwise, as his Maker

Maker should see needful to communicate ;
 or is it any Impeachment of the Wisdom or
 Goodness of his said Maker, that he might
 thus reserve in himself the Right, as well as the
 Power, of such farther Revelation, and the
 Knowledge of things to be communicated,
 when, and in what manner he thought fit ; and
 this makes it not only clear that the Redemp-
 tion of Mankind by Christ, the *Messiah*, was
 first promised in the beginning of Time ; but
 that it was afterwards perform'd and brought
 forth in the fulness of Time, according to, and
 in pursuance of, that Promise ; otherwise, be-
 cause God would not have given an imperfect
 Law, he must upon *Adam's* Fall, have imme-
 diately sent his Son into Paradise to have re-
 stored *Adam* ; it might as well be said, he
 might have actually made *Adam* perform a
 perfect Obedience to his Law, and so have
 prevented any falling at all ; all which, it
 would be the utmost Arrogance as well as
 impiety, to say ought to have been done ; and
 it is most certain it was not done ; because *Adam*
 fell from his first rectitude of Soul, in which
 it is evident, that tho' he had a capacity to
 Obey, yet he was not under a force compelling
 him to Obey.

I know some of these Men deny any such
 thing as a Fall ; they are forced to it by their
 way of Reasoning ; but the propensity in the
 Will of Man to offend, and to break continu-
 ally with his Maker (which appears to this
 Day, and which they dare not deny) evinces
 the Fact, (*viz.*) that *Adam* fell, the Evidence
 is so strong, that their own Scheme is full of it ;
 for while they affirm, that Man has a Power
 in

in his Soul, namely, his Reason, to perform a sincere, and what they call a perfect Obedience, they yet grant, that he does not do it, but often fails, transgresses, turns Rebel, and offends against God.

Now, why is it not as much an Impeachment of the Wisdom and Goodness of a righteous God, that he did not put Man not only into a Capacity, but under the Force and Necessity of compleat Obedience ; as it is that he did not make a full and compleat Revelation to him of all that should ever be necessary for him to do or to know? And this I think may be a full Answer to all the Cavils of those who exalt their Phantoms, call'd *Natural Religion*, in the room of the ordinary course of God's Methods with Mankind, for his farther and daily Direction in his way to Heaven.

But this leads me too far out of my way, I return therefore to the Subject of this present Chapter ; namely, that the first Knowledge of God in the Mind, and to the Will of Man, was all by Revelation, and that all subsequent Revelation is no more than an Appendix to those first Lights.

The first gift God gave, to his yet unfinished Creature, was a *Soul*. This Soul either consisted of innate Qualities, as some will have it, such as we call Capacities, Faculties, and Powers ; or was a Vessel only, made capable of receiving such Powers as his Maker should from time to time see fit to give. Some of his Powers were, without doubt, bestow'd at first, and seem to be the constituent parts of a Soul. But certainly those Powers were capable of receiving new Lights, an Encrease of Knowledge,

age, and farther Discoveries from his Maker every Day, as God should please to communicate himself to him.

I think this demonstrable, even from the Additions which we every Day receive in human, as well as Divine Things; whether they are communicated in a way of Providence, or of superior Discovery, is not material; we see they are really communicated, and we see our Reason is not only aspiring after higher Illuminations, but is every Day obtaining them: To say every Man may pursue the highest and most perfect Dictates of Reason, as God has given this Reason for a perfect Rule, is contradicted, even by our Experience, in that all Men are not alike qualify'd to make use of the Reason which they are possess'd of; the Settings of the Soul are in some prescrib'd, and narrow'd by one accident, and in others by a distorting Cause; here the Organ is defective, there the Powers are narrowed; will these be justify'd before God, for the imperfect use of that Degree of Reason which they had? and yet is the sincere use of that Reason, the grand Defence that we may make for all our Imperfections.

I am very ready to acknowledge, the free and unprejudic'd use of Reason, to be a very great Step in our way to Heaven; but I can by no means grant that it is a sufficient Rule, and that if it be adher'd to so far as we say we can adhere to it, *it justifies us before God*; and that *God cannot in justice require any more of us*: 'Tis a way of talking that we have not been used to; it may be true, that every Offender, at the same time that he offends God, sins also against

against his own Reason ; but it cannot be true that this is all his guilt.

But I would fain know how this obeying the Voice of Reason comes to be called Christianity, I readily allow that Christianity is as old as the Fall of Man, that is, not far off from the Creation ; but how comes this Religion which they call *the Religion of Reason*, to be thus *nick-nam'd* Christianity ; we all know that in the common Acceptation, the meaning of the word Christianity is the Profession of Faith in the MESSIAH, *which is, being interpreted, the CHRIST* ; and that Believers in Christ are called Christians, and have been so from the first Church of New Converts, erected at *Antioch*. But how comes our modern Infidels who expect to be justify'd by the meer use of their Reason, and that *this is all God can demand of them* ; I say, How can they prophane the sacred Name of Christ, and the Religion of the *Holy Jesus*, by gilding their Idol with it in such a manner, and set up their infallibility of Reason, which is itself a dark and dirty, and many ways a fallible instrument and call it Christianity ?

The just Remarks upon this gross Absurdity might well pass, even by itself, for a full Answer to his whole *Volume*. To call his Light of Reason a Gospel, and his new modelled Principle of obeying Reason, Christianity, to me so inconsistent with the Doctrine of Christ, that nothing can be more contrary to it.

To say God has given Man no other Faculties to judge with, but those by which we are distinguish'd from Brutes, is to say, that the
Christian

Christian has no other Power to judge by than a Heathen, and perhaps, in the literal Sense of the word, it may be true ; because, as he says, we are ordered to *examine the Truth of all the Gospel Revelation*: But to add that the Christian has not those Faculties farther illuminated, and his Soul led into a higher and different Exercise, by the help of farther communicated Lights from above, is to cast off all Christianity at once ; by which we are made to hope for the Assistance and secret Influences of the Blessed Spirit of Truth, who shall *guide us into all Truth, shall teach us all things, and bring all things to our remembrance*. This, I say, is Christianity ; now as they reject this Spirit, call it an Enthusiasm, make it the Subject of their Ridicule, and tell us that using the reasonable Faculties after the best manner we can, must *justify us before God*, and at the same time talk of Christianity, I say they are guilty of the most monstrous Absurdity.

The Knowledge of a God is the first Introduction to all Religion ; for the being of a God being recogniz'd by his rational Creature, the worshiping (that is paying a Homage to) that God is an irresistible consequence ; Reason directs, Reason commands it ; but all the Light of Reason in the politeſt of Men, could never direct the manner by which God was pleas'd to accept of his Creatures Homage, till God himself was pleas'd to direct it by a farther Illumination, which, in a word is Revelation and nothing else ; as is excellently well observ'd in the Bishop of *London's* second Pastoral Letter, mentioned above, and publish'd on this very Occasion.

Nor

Nor do I see, as these Men pretend they do, the Necessity there was that God should communicate his whole Will to the first Branches of human Race ; what he thought fit to communicate to them, might be so far his whole Mind and Will to them, as that it was their perfect rule to walk by, which if they had perfectly obey'd, there seemsto be no room to doubt, they would have been accepted.

God himself, speaking to *Cain*, tells him so much, thus, (*viz.*) *if thou doest well, shall thou not be accepted?* This doing well consisted in acting according to the Revelation then made : But certainly there are things required of us since that time, which would not have been possible for *Cain* to have perform'd, and therefore God did not require them ; but as the Will and Commands of God are extended to a farther Degree than they were then, so Man has farther Powers of Obedience given to him, other Duties commanded, and farther Means of knowing and obeying them communicated ; and this by the same Method of Revelation.

And why should it not be as just with God, in different lengths and periods of Time, to require other acts of Obedience from Man, than he at first gave him the Knowledge of, and the Power to perform? and this upon giving additional Powers, both to know and to obey, as it is to require that the Earth should not bring forth Fruits, and Products once Natural to it, without the future Labour of Man cultivating it, and improving it by Husbandry ; and even with that addition, yet not without fructifying Showers, refreshing Dews, and the other

other half as well of Nature as of Art, and that upon those Applications it should be fruitful. We do not object that it was any Imperfection in God, that his first *Fiat* did not give Man a Law to reach all that was required of him, or should ever be requir'd of any Man after him.

Doubtless the first Revelation of the Duty, owing to God by his Creatures, had it been perfectly obey'd, had been sufficient to the Man if he had obey'd it; but he failing in his Obedience, God has thought fit to change his situation, and he stands now upon another foot of Obedience than he did before; and 'tis happy for him that he does so; for, whereas before, nothing but a perfect Obedience could be accepted; now through the Merit and Sacrifice of the *Messiah*, an imputed Righteousness is accepted for him, and he is justify'd in the Merit of a Redeemer.

Was this reveal'd to *Adam* in his perfect State? Certainly it was not, and therefore 'tis a mistake, to say no worse of it; to tell us that Christianity is as old as the Creation, which I shall state clearly by itself, *Adam* had a perfect Law given to him in the State of Innocence; but *Adam* broke with God, and upon that Breach his Affairs took a new Turn as we call it, and then came the Gospel Revelation, as we shall see presently.

But to go back to the State of Innocence, all the Religion *Adam* had, and which was planted in him, with his Reason, was a plain and evident Revelation, and nothing else; so that the Religion of Reason is no more or less than this, (*viz.*) a Revelation of the Will of God

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to the Soul of Man, at the same time, and as soon as God gave him a Soul to receive it.

Let us now grant, and lay it down as an establish'd Principle, that *Adam*, in his State of Innocence, had a perfect inlightned Soul, and a compleat Knowledge and Will of the righteous Law which his Maker had given him ; he knew also, that he had a Power to Obey, and his Obedience according to that Knowledge and Power, would, without doubt, have been accepted, if it had been, as it ought to have been, full and compleat.

N. B. These People seem to be placing us now, after so many Ages of Corruption in the very same Station and Circumstance of Life as *Adam* was in his Innocence ; namely, that we have a Perfect Law, which if we sincerely live up to, (adding that we have a Power also to live up to it) God will, nay must, accept us ; let them stand to that Point, and we shall soon see them plung'd into a Gulph of confus'd Notions, which it is impossible to extricate them out of, but by the Doctrine of a farther Revelation.

If *Adam* had liv'd up to the first Law, which was the Rule of his Obedience, he had remain'd innocent ; but *Adam* did not sincerely obey that Law, or follow the Dictates of the reasoning Light, with which God had endow'd him : And pray what was *Adam's* Case then ? His being accepted, was then no more the Question ; nothing but the threatn'd Death, which we all have read of, ensued : Could *Adam* have said to God, I have
offended

offended indeed, but I will obey exactly for the future, and sincerely walk according to all the means thou hast given me to know, or the Rules thou hast given me to walk by, and therefore such a future Obedience must justify my Conduct, because thou hast not given me any other Lights to walk by.

Would this have been a sufficient Plea for *Adam*, without any Retrospect to the Breach he had made, and the Rebellion he had been guilty of? If it had, then the same Resolution of Amendment will do still, and be sufficient for us all, tho' we break that new Engagement a thousand times a Day; and God is bound to pass by, and take no Notice of, much less resent any of our most horrid Excusions, be it Rapine or Murder, Adultery, Perjury, or any more flagrant Offence: A fine easy way this is of being accepted by our Maker!

But *Adam's* Affairs stood in another Situation, and so do ours also; for *Adam* having broken that most just and Righteous Law, stood immediately, *as it were* at the Bar of God's Justice, as a Criminal; and had his Trespas to answer for, according as is exprest in Gen. chap. iii. 13. *What is this that thou hast done?* Nor was *Adam* ignorant; sense of guilt immediately struck him; his Reason was strong enough to tell him he had offended, tho' it immediately suffer'd him to Act the weakest and most foolish Part that ever any reasonable Creature did; namely, to hide himself among a few Bushes from the search of, INFINITE! and then to cover his Nakedness from the sight of Beasts; was this the Work of a perfect

fectly inlightned Soul? was it not a certain Token of the Weakness of humane Reasoning, and how much it stood in need of farther Illumination?

But to return: *Adam* having offended, how stood the Case between God and him, as to the Law of his Reason, and the Rule of his Life; and what did his self-sufficient Knowledge do for him? and here leaving the Scripture Account, because these Men dispise it: This is certain by the History of the first Times: Their Reason might dictate to them that there was a God, and it did so: And Reason also dictated that he was to be worshiped; all the World came into these Things by the meer reasoning Light.

Nulla gens tam barbara quæ nescit esse Deum.

But how dim and dark was this Light! they neither retain'd right Notions of this God; who, or what he was, or what his Mind and Will was; much less did they entertain the least Notion of the *Modus* of his Worship; how, and in what manner, he would be approach'd, or in what manner, he would now accept of the Homage of his Creatures; and this Ignorance ran thro' the whole Race, the wrong Notions of worshipping God, which these self-sufficient Creatures formed, in their highest reasoning Capacities, fill'd the World with the grossest Idolatries, and the vilest Corruption of things sacred, that could possibly be imagined.

But to *Adam*, and to those few to whom God was pleas'd farther to reveal himself, the Case

Case differ'd: No sooner was the Promise of the *Messiah* (the Seed of the Woman) given to him, but he was immediately taught from Heaven, what it was *God would have him to do*; namely, to return to God by Repentance; to accept of and believe the Promise of a *Messiah*, and to worship, in the sincerest manner, and in the most acceptable way, the supreme *Being*; God had, notwithstanding the sentence of Death pass'd on him, by the righteous first Law which he had broken, mercifully spar'd him from the Death he had deserv'd; and reveal'd a Saviour to his Faith that should heal this Breach between God and him, and make a full satisfaction in his stead, and that by offering an accepted Sacrifice, even that of his own incarnate Body and Blood, as is preach'd in all the process of the Gospel.

This being the Case with *Adam*, we see the Facts immediately acted upon the stage of Life; *Adam*, a sincere Penitent for his first Offence, applied himself, after his exclusion from Paradise, to Labour, as the Text implies, and brought up his Sons to do the like. Hence we find *Cain*, the eldest Son, and Heir-Apparent to the Empire of the World, was a Plowman; and *Abel* his Brother, a Grasier; *Gen. iv. 2. Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

Reason might very well dictate to them, that they must apply themselves to such Work; since God had expressly told them upon the Fall, that the Ground, being curs'd for their sake, should bring forth nothing naturally, that is, not without Cultivation, which we call to this day in some Dialects, labouring the

Land; and that in the sweat of his Brows he should eat his Bread. All this, I say, *Adam's Reason* might lead him to; but what he was to do towards reconciling himself to God after his sad Fall and Defection from him; and how, or in what manner, to pay his Homage to him in the mean time; of all this *Adam* could know nothing, 'till God reveal'd his merciful Design of a Redemption for him; by his Son, the *Messiah*; and from this *Messiah*, who was to be offer'd up for his sins, with the promises of accepting Sinners on his account, came all the intervening Sacrifices of the Law, and in the practice of which, the Heathen Nations follow'd the Example.

Now whence came this Knowledge of the Mind and Will of God, as to Man's Recovery, and of his Repentance, and Faith in the promis'd Seed? Man knew nothing of it before the Fall; nor in the Guilt and Terror of the Fact did he know any thing of it; he thought of nothing but of running away like a Fool, when he knew not whither to go; and hiding himself, as above, from Omniscience itself. The Light of his Reason, tho' so clear and good, shew'd him nothing of what was his Duty in that unhappy Condition; all this must certainly come by a subsequent Revelation; and therefore Mr. *Milton*, with an admirable Turn of Invention, brings in the Angel as sent from Heaven to inform *Adam* of his State and Condition; how sunk by his Fall, how to be recover'd by his Repentance, and by his Faith in the promis'd Mercy of a *Messiah*; who should offer up an accepted sacrifice to God, as a Propitiation for him, and all his believing Posterity;

ty ; and how in the mean time, as Types of the great Attonement through the Blood of the *Messiah*, God required a series of other Sacrifices upon the occasion of future Transgression, whose Blood being offered up, and having a View towards the great Attonement and Sacrifice of Christ, should be accepted of God.

Hence came the Knowledge of true Religion into the World, and that it must be by a glorious Revelation of the Mind and Will of God, for the eternal Salvation of Men, seems out of all question ; because, as above, *Adam* himself, by the light of the most exalted Reason, knew nothing at all of it.

Here therefore, as a farther Testimony of the Fact, I demand of these new Religion-makers, how came *Cain* and *Abel* to know that God would be propitiated by a sacrifice ? What was the meaning of bringing a Lamb, or firstling as 'tis call'd, of the Flock, and a Basket of Corn, or whatever other Fruits of the Earth it might be, and *burning them to God*. Where was the sense of it, and what could meer Reason say to it ? Had they been given personally, and the Lord of Heaven had taken them as a Quit-Rent for the Tenure of the Lands they held, it had been something rational, it had look'd like a *reasonable Service* ; but who could instruct them to set them on fire, and that in order to be accepted they must first be destroyed, and yet this was called in *Abel*, at least, an *acceptable Sacrifice*, Heb. xi. 3.

Was it a rational Homage, or a reveal'd, that an innocent Lamb should first be kill'd, and his Blood pour'd out, and then his Flesh

burnt to Ashes, as a Tribute to a righteous and merciful Being, the King of Heaven ! and yet this was the Case ; it was first done without the help of any reasoning Light, and the whole Pagan World has follow'd the Pattern ever since ; 'till believing that God ought to be honour'd with the best sacrifices they could procure, they came at length to offer up their own Children, and give *the Fruit of their Bodies, for the Sin of their Souls.*

But let us keep where we are, and look at it thro' the Glass, or Light, of Reason in its fullest strength : How incongruous was the very thing call'd a Sacrifice, or Burnt-Offering, to the very Notion of Religion, and to the most reasonable Thoughts of the Beneficence of a merciful God ! Reason could have no Notion of it ; 'twas altogether inconsistent with the first Discoveries of a supreme Being ; it must come by an immediate Intelligence with and a subsequent Communication of the Mind and Will of God to Mankind, and this is all Revelation and nothing else.

If then this Revelation, or Discovery of the Mind and Will of God, was subsequent to the perfect Law, which these men pretend was given him at his Creation ; then that Law was not compleat at first, and if not compleat at first, then the sincerest Obedience to that first Law cannot be all that God can expect or require of man, as is now advanc'd ; for doubtless Heaven would expect the like sincere Regard to be paid to the subsequent Communication, as he did to the first.



C H A P. III.

Of the true Antiquity of CHRISTIANITY, and that it is not as old as the Creation, tho' very near it ; Also of the Absurdity of calling the Religion of Reason, in the modern Sense of that Word, by the Name of CHRISTIANITY.

BEING to speak of the Antiquity of *Christianity*, in this Chapter, it is necessary to observe, that the learned Author referr'd to has not, as I think he ought, explained his Terms ; or told us what we are to understand by the thing Christianity, having left us to determine of it, every one as he pleases.

I must not fall into the same Error, but must at least give my Explanation of it, not only as I think of it, but as I think we are all unavoidably led by the Tenor of his Discourse, to suppose every one must understand it, and that he understands it so himself.

By *Christianity* therefore, I understand the *Religion of Jesus* ; that Religion that leads us to believe in, and rest upon *Jesus Christ* for Life and Salvation, acknowledging him to be the *Life* and *Light* of the World, and that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting Life ; believing him to be the Way, and the Truth, and the Life, and that no man cometh unto the Father but by him ; believing that God promised him in the first
Ages

Ages of Time, so call'd the *Beginning of Time* ; and afterwards sent him in the Fullness of Time, not to condemn the World, but that the World through him might be saved. *John* iii. 17.

The Servants of this *Jesus* were called Christians, and the Doctrine of Faith and Repentance which is preached in his Name, and has been preach'd and profess'd so many Ages is Christianity, and has been always called so.

Having thus explained what I think is generally understood by Christianity, I deny that this Christianity is as old as the Creation ; and I make it good by proving the direct contrary Proposition ; *namely*,

That there was a Time after the Creation, when Christianity, or the Christian Religion, was not.

When the first Man stood firm in his created perfect state, pure and holy as he came out of the hands of his Creator, his Obedience to his Maker perfect, and his Innocence compleat, when Sin was not entred into the World, nor *Death by Sin*, there was no need of a Saviour, no need of a sacrifice, for *Adam* having no Sin there could be no Expiation ; God being not offended, there could be no Propitiation ; the seed of the Woman was not in Promise, much less in Expectation, less still was it an Object of Faith ; as there was no Christ wanted, so there was no Christ promised ; as there was no Sin, there was no Death, and no Redemption in view ; no *Christ*, and consequently no *Christianity*.

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How long *Adam* continued in that blessed state of Innocence, Revelation is silent; the written Word has not mentioned it, nor has Tradition suggested any thing towards it; as for the crude Gueſſes and Pretences of Men about it, they are ſo abſolutely void of Rule, and of Foundation to judge by, that I eſteem it the higheſt Preſumption in us to enter into the Enquiry, and as much ſo in thoſe that adhere to them or to their Gueſſes as authentic; and therefore I ſay no more to it but this, whether three days only, or an hundred Years, or how much more or leſs, the thing (as bleſſed be God all ſuch Enquiries are) is as needleſs as it is impoſſible to know.

But be it more or leſs, this is certain, and is ſufficient to the Argument, that during that whole bleſſed Interval, between the Creation and the Fall, CHRISTIANITY WAS NOT.

There is a Cavil indeed rais'd againſt this, and it is no more than a Cavil, and ſhall be no more than nam'd, (*viz.*) that there was no ſuch Interval at all; but that the two firſt rational Creatures ſinn'd as ſoon as they were made, that the Soul rebelled even the ſame Hour that it was breathed into the Body of the Man; that no ſooner was the perfect Law of God, the Rule of their Obedience given them, or laid down as a Command, but the ſoul of the Woman firſt objected againſt it as hard and unjuſt, and reſolv'd not to obey it; and that the Man coming into the ſame ſentiments, join'd with her in the Rebellion.

This Cavil I only name, as I promis'd above; becauſe firſt of all, it is evident, that it cannot be known; and, ſecondly, that it ſeems to

to be highly improbable to be true. But the first is sufficient to silence it in this place, seeing what cannot be known cannot be proved, and ought not to be received as an establish'd Proposition.

That there must be some Interval between the Creation and the Fall, is to me demonstrable, from the several steps necessary for the giving a Law to the Man after he was created, and for expecting his Obedience; and tho' we were to pass from the Account given of it in the Scripture, which yet I do not; yet I say the nature of the thing makes it necessary, that after the Law given to *Adam*, as the Rule of his Conduct, and during his Obedience to which he continued innocent, there must be some space of Time, be it much or little, in which he remain'd obedient and innocent, enjoy'd the Paradise he was plac'd in, and was a compleatly happy Creature; it is not at all likely, that he was created, plac'd in Paradise, receiv'd a Law, transgress'd that Law, was sentenc'd to Death, had the Doctrine of Repentance preach'd to him, and a Christ to redeem him promis'd, and was then turn'd out of the Garden into the wide World, all in the same instant; I say it is not probable, much less demonstrable.

This Interval then, let it be what it will, long or short, a hundred years, or not a year, is the time in which, as above CHRISTIANITY WAS NOT, and therefore it cannot be as old as the Creation.

But having laid this down as a Proposition, which I think is self-evident, I come very readily into the real Antiquity of the Christian Reli-

Religion, and agree, that the Promise of Christ was the first and immediate Product of the merciful Disposition of God to his Creature (fallen and lapsed as he was) and was promulgated to man as the Object of his Faith immediately after his Fall; and had the Author I mention said in the Title Page of his Book, that Christianity was as old as the sentence pass'd upon the Man after his Fall, he had said right.

But this would not serve to his purpose, for he would by his pretended Antiquity of Christianity represent it to us, as what he calls a natural Principle; which were I to grant his Notion of *Natural* as annex'd to *Religion* would not do; for Christianity was not infus'd with the Soul, it was not an innate Idea, but was evidently a subsequent Revelation; Christ being publish'd to *Adam*, and promised in those Words included in the sentence upon the Serpent, *Gen. iii. 15. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*

This was the Promise of the Messiah, which, according to Scripture Interpretation, is the Christ, *Job. i. 41. We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.*

The Faith of this Promise, that is to say believing in this *MESSIAH* who was to come, and of whom *Philip* said to *Nathanael*, *Moses* in the Law, and the Prophets, did write; see the same first of *John* ver. 45. I say this Faith was really Christianity (tho' it was not call'd by that Name) as much as Faith in the same Christ is now after he is already come.

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That the Patriarchs did thus understand it, and that all the faithful did thus believe, is evident in sacred History, in abundance of Places, and tho' it is not called by the Name Christianity, as we now express it, yet 'tis plain to be read tho' in other Expressions, such as that of *Jacob*, when he was blessing his Sons, *Gen. xlix. 18. I have waited for thy Salvation, O Lord*; the meaning whereof is no more or less than this, I have believed thy Promise of a Christ to be the Salvation of thy People. In another place he is called the Consolation of *Israel*, *Luke ii. 25. Simeon* was just and devout, *waiting for the Consolation of Israel*. In the same Chapter, *ver. 38. 'tis said that Anna, the Prophetess, spake of Jesus to all them, that looked for redemption in Jerusalem*. Again, it is said of *Joseph of Arimathea*, *Luke xxiii. 51. That he waited for the Kingdom of God*.

All these Texts being Historical, may, as I said before, be referr'd to in proofs of Fact, namely, to prove that the Jews, such of them, as were just and devout, believ'd in, and waited for the Salvation of the Jews, by the coming of the promis'd Seed, of which all the Books of the Old Testament were full, and it was generally called by those exalted Titles, the Salvation of God, the Redemption of *Israel*, the Salvation of *Israel*, the Kingdom of God, and the like. And what is this, in short, but the Promise of Salvation by a Redeemer to be sent, and this Redeemer being Christ, and no other, what is all this but Christianity?

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So that thus the Christian Religion has been evidently professed by all true Believers, ever since the Promise made of a Seed which should break the Head of the Serpent; and that was immediately after the Fall of Man.

Mr. *Calvin*, in his Institutions, gives us one whole and large Discourse, speaking of the Redemption of Man since his Fall, by a Saviour, to expound to us all the Prophets, and in all the Places where they so evidently speak of and predict the coming of Christ into the World to redeem his Church, and this he does with so much Clearness, that it seems to admit of no Controversy, that in all the Ages of the Mosaic Dispensation, the Eyes of all the Believing Jews were guided, even by every Sacrifice, and every Ceremony of the whole Law, to look forward to, and wait for, Christ as the Salvation and Redemption of his People, and what is this but Christianity?

Thus, as soon as Man sinn'd against his Maker, the Mercy of God, interposing, establish'd a Saviour, which is called therefore the Salvation, and the Consolation of *Israel*; him *Adam* himself saw, and believ'd him that had promis'd; and we see the Author of that glorious Epistle to the Hebrews, commenting upon this antient Faith thus, Heb. xi. 13. *These all died in Faith, not having receiv'd the Promises*, that is not having seen them fulfill'd by the coming of the Messiah; but he adds, *Having seen them afar off, and being perswaded of them, and embrac'd them*: This confirms it past all doubt, that the Fathers, (so the same Author to the Hebrews calls them) before Christ, believed in Christ, were perswaded of, and embraced
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the Promises of Christ, tho' he was seen only as at the greatest imaginable distance of Time.

All this is in Proof of the Antiquity of Christianity, or of the Christian Faith ; but it is plain also, that this confirms what I have said above, that before *Adam* had sinn'd, Christianity was not: While he had not fallen, what need was there of his being lifted up? What need of a Saviour to restore him, a Sacrifice to atone for him? Christ was not heard of, or the Promise of a Seed made ; neither was it of any moment to *Adam* (unless it had been reveal'd to him, that he would certainly fall, break with his Maker, and rebel against God) if that had been known to him, indeed, it might be probable ; but there was no likelihood of any such thing, the very suggestion of it is preposterous, and we may as well suggest that he would not have fallen if it had been foretold him ; which, however, is all remote from the present Question.

But what does all this amount to? I answer, It fully proves to us, that this Gospel Dispensation, was not an Original planted in the Soul of Man, at its being first breathed into his Body, which is the very thing we have proposed ; that it was not twisted in with his Reason, and form'd with him in such a manner, as that he could not exercise his Reason without it, as the first general Notions of a God are: But that it is all a meer Revelation, a discovery made to him subsequent to his Offence ; a merciful appointment of Grace and Mercy to him, when he was as it were

were sunk in the utmost depth of Misery and Distress, under the Weight of a threatned Curse; to talk of this before his Fall, would be to the last degree absurd, for what need of saving that which was not lost?

Hence, I say, it is evident that the Promise of Christ was subsequent to the Fall of Man, and not heard of before it; and hence during all the Interval between the Creation, and the Fall CHRISTIANITY WAS NOT; and when IT WAS, when it had a Being in the Promise of Christ, it was all a Revelation, and all subsequent to the first Inspiration, or Revelation of Religion to the Soul of Man.

What then can the Patrons of the Religion of Reason, or of Nature, let them call it by what gross Terms they please, I say, what can they gain by tracing back the Religion of *Jesus*, which they call Christianity, to the Fall of Man? Indeed they can get nothing by it, but to bring out the clearest Evidence of its being at first all Revelation, a Religion unknown to Man in his Original State, utterly conceal'd from him, and not discover'd till made necessary, by his Misery, to support his Soul under the Weight of his Sorrows, bring him to true Repentance, and show him a way of Salvation, which all the Light of his Reason could see nothing of.

Thus they have been made the Underminers of their own Cause, and have rais'd Arguments against themselves, even out of their own Objection.

And to confirm this yet farther, here is an evident Proof, that the making a subsequent Revelation to Man, after the first Discoveries

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of God to his Soul, at its introduction into his Body, is no Impeachment of the Divine Wisdom, as if God had not sufficiently reveal'd himself to him at first; because by the Consequence of the Thing it could not have been otherwise.

To what purpose should Christ have been reveal'd to Man in his upright perfect State? with what Efficacy could the Doctrine of Salvation, and the Notions of Redemption have been publish'd to him, who had not offended? *Adam* might well have reply'd to God himself, What occasion have I for all this? I have always punctually observ'd the most righteous Law which thou hast given me, and resolve to observe it with the utmost exactness as long as I live.

The Reason of a MESSIAH is founded in the Delinquency of the Man, and could have no Place in the Nature of the Thing, till the Offence was committed; but then, we may even say there was a necessity of a farther Revelation than that which was at first made to him: Nay, if you will have it so, I might be allow'd to say, that God himself was oblig'd to make such a farther Revelation, or none at all; because to have reveal'd Christ as a promis'd Saviour, before the Man had sinn'd, and thereby stood in need of him, would have been inverting the Order of things, and could not be done without the greatest Impropriety.

And what Weakness or Imperfection was there in all this? Not to reveal the Cure before the Wound was given; not to shew the Remedy before the Disease? On the contrary,
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it was highly consonant to, and agreeing with, all the ordinary Methods of Divine Wisdom ; who having first established the due Order of things, and the Courses of Causes and Consequences, unalterable but by himself ; is pleased, except in manifest Necessity, to make all the ordinary Courses, even of his own Providence, to observe and bend to those Courses of Cause and Consequence, and very rarely to anticipate Nature ; and not at all, but upon extraordinary Occasions.

It remains to speak of the Necessity of a further Revelation, in this great Article of the Promise of a MESSIAH, and that Man could arrive to the Knowledge of it by no other way, which is the Subject of the next Chapter.





C H A P. IV.

That the Promise of a MESSIAH made to Man after his Fall, could be known by no other Method, but that of Revelation, and that all the Powers of his Reason could not lead him to the Discovery.

MANY learned Men have spoken largely to this Point; namely, that tho' the Light of Man's Reason did lead him to just Notions of the Being of a God, and that it was a rational Consequence from thence, that this God was to be worshipped; yet that the most perfect degree of human Understanding, did not, and could not guide the Man to determine what kind of Homage and Adoration was to be paid to God, and with what kind of Worship he would be best pleased.

This appears by the mean and weak Efforts of the most refin'd Understandings in the first Ages of Knowledge, when they came to act in matters of *Religious Worship*; in all which they run into the grossest Absurdities, practising inhuman Cruelties, various and unheard of Barbarisms, unclean and filthy Customs, and even some unnatural, as sacrificing their own Children, to appease their Gods; all which, as they were inconsistent with Reason, so they were unworthy of God, and only serve
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to testify that the meer Light of Reason is but dark and dim in the clearest Heads, till assisted by farther and farther Illuminations.

But I proceed; for this part, I say, has been largely spoken to by many learned Men, and by some eminent Divines on several Occasions, even against the Infidels of this Age: But I carry it on to one Circumstance more, which reaches the Case before me, in a manner very convincing.

If Reason, with its utmost Illuminations, could not discover to Mankind, how, and in what manner God would be worshipped, much less could it discover Christ to the Souls of Men: In this discovery there are so many amazing Wonders, that Reason is so far from being able to reveal them to herself, that she is hardly able to conceive of them, even when reveal'd to her from God.

I know some would make the Wonders of Redemption be a Reason against their Faith, and a just Cause why they should not lay any stress upon it, a very wrong way of arguing, and fatal to the Souls of those who flie to it; perplexing them with inextricable Doubts and Difficulties about accepting the offered Salvation, which it is their only eternal Felicity that they may accept.

I think, on the contrary, those Wonders which appear in the Gospel Revelation, should be so far from arguing against, that they assist to convince our Reason of the Necessity of its being an immediate Revelation; who, but the God whose Wisdom is unsearchable, and his Ways past finding out, could have thought of, much less reveal'd, and offered to

the fallen offending Creature in his Extremity, under the Sentence of THE DEATH, as it is emphatically exprest in the Threatning, a Ransom by a MESSIAH, by an Offering equal to the Offence, and worthy the Acceptance of the Majesty offended? by what human Method could it have been assured to the Soul of the Man, and the Creature be brought to receive Comfort from it, in a condition of all that can be conceiv'd of the most miserable and disconsolate?

Could his Reason have suggested it to him, or any thing like it? Could he have form'd any Idea of it in his Mind? Take him in his most exalted Flights, opinionative and conceited, as the worst of our present Deists and Free-Thinkers are: I am perswaded none of them, take them, I say, in the highest Notions that they can form for themselves, can say, they could have come up to it.

Let us endeavour to argue this Point upon the highest suggestions of Reason, and let them begin at the beginning of Things. They must grant us first, that Man, notwithstanding his reasoning Powers, did offend God, did fall; let them call it what they please; this was a Breach of the Law of Reason, and Reason might very well charge the Criminal: But that God would be pleas'd to forgive the Breach, and to accept him for the Rectitude of his future Conduct, what will Reason say to that? Nay, and that God must do this; that he could not require any more of his Creature than his Reason would direct, when as indeed he had not acted as his Reason did direct, but contrary to it: This his Reason could never
dictate

dictate any more than how this forgiving Quality in God should be expected.

To say, therefore, if the Man sincerely pursues the Dictates of his Reason, God is bound to accept him, is saying Nothing; unless you will also venture to say, that he is bound to accept him, notwithstanding any Breach of his Obedience to that Reason; and to say that, is to say God is oblig'd to accept the Man, whether he does obey his Reason or no.

And here the Necessity of Revelation appears again, for tho' the Doctrine of a Satisfaction by a Redeemer, be the most rational Scheme of Religion that could be thought of, and no rational Man ever objected against it on that Account; yet Reason could never dictate to Mankind, that his offended Maker would be propitiated after his Offence, any more than that it should be effected by a Sacrifice: Nor had the offering up thousands of Rams, and Ten thousands of Rivers of Oil, or even the *fruit of the Body for the sins of the Soul*, had any thing rational in it; if God had not reveal'd from Heaven, that it was his Will to be thus approach'd by Man, as a Type of the great Offering mention'd above, of the Messiah; Which he had appointed for a Propitiatory Sacrifice, for the Sins of the World, and till he should come, when all those Types were to cease, and be swallow'd up in the thing typified; all which was dictated to the Man, not by his Reason; for that was no way capable of so much Illumination, but it came to him directly from God; and if they will not call it Revelation, let them tell us what it is, and we will give them leave to call it what they please.

But let them call it what they will, they must also give us leave to call it Revelation, for such it is, and nothing else.

None of our Infidels, that I meet with, will say, they never offended their Maker, or that they have so sincerely adhered to the perfect Law of Reason, which they talk of, as to have made no Breach. Well, how then is that Breach to be made up? Is God indispensibly oblig'd to take their broken Obedience for perfect, to day sincere, to morrow insincere, to day acting rationally, to morrow brutally and immorally, is this a rational Scheme?

Or is it more probable that God being offended by the Immorality of yesterday, should reject and refuse your Obedience and Sincerity of to Day, till his Justice, angry as it was, and offended, should be satisfy'd for the Insult offered before? And how shall this be done? I may call upon Reason itself to speak, whether it ought to be done or no; and I may challenge all the Reason of Man to have found out a Propitiation equal to the Offence, and not unworthy of the Majesty of God to accept of, in the whole World.

In the Crisis of this Exigence, God himself, for none else could conceive of it, brings to Light the glorious Medium of a Reconciliation by a propitiatory Sacrifice; namely, the Blood of Attonement, hence, justly, call'd the Blood of *the everlasting Covenant*. Heb. xiii. 20. and this he reveal'd to *Adam* in the moment of his Convictions, mercifully to prevent his Despair.

Let us go back to it again: Man had sinn'd, fallen from his first Rectitude, 'tis no matter how,

how, or when, or in what manner; but he had sinn'd : Sinn'd against God and his own Reason : who should dictate to him that God was any thing but righteous, a just Judge, and as such, must execute the Sentence threatned upon him ? Where had he the first Discoveries that God was merciful, and that he should be forgiven ? I demand of these Men, whether *Adam's* Reason could dictate that to him ? when on the contrary God had expressly declar'd otherwise, in the threatning of Death, which was positive ? it must suppose God to break that righteous Word, and not be infinitely just, if Death did not follow, for nothing could be more warmly exprest than the Commination is, *IN THE DAY thou offendest thou shalt surely die*, Gen. ii. 17. Nothing can be more awful and solemn than this Threatning, thou shalt SURELY or certainly DIE ; and in the very Day ; did *Adam's* Reason dictate to him that the God of Truth would break his Word ? that would be to make his Reason be the Serpent that beguil'd them, for that was the very Bait the Serpent laid, and this is the Bait our Infidels at this Day lay for themselves, viz. God has threatned you indeed with Death, and Eternal Death ; but do not believe that God can be so cruel, do not believe, (as they tell us King *Charles* the Second said,) *That God who is a gracious and beneficent Being, will be so severe as to punish eternally for a few out of the way Pleasures*, not judging, as the Lord does, by the Corruption and Pollution of the Heart.

Now, if Reason thus gives the Lie to God's positive Threatnings, I must say Reason acts
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the Serpent upon us, and puts himself in the Devil's stead, to delude us to our Destruction.

God is a merciful and beneficent Being, his Mercy is his Glory, *'tis exalted above all his Name*; but God's Mercy is exhibited in Christ only, and received and embraced by Faith in him, and by that only; Christ is the Channel from whence all those Streams flow, and thro' whom they are convey'd, his blood is the Attonement, *and speaks better things than that of Abel*, Heb. xii. 24.

But supposing this, only by the way; how, *I say*, did Man first come to know that God would have Mercy on him, and forgive him, notwithstanding his capital Offence? Doubtless he knew he had offended God, when he said, *I was afraid*; his Knowledge of Guilt appear'd many ways; but how did he know that God would have Mercy on him and forgive him, and that he should not die? It will be hard for them to assign any Method how he came to know this, but by Revelation from the very Mouth of God himself; where, in the Sentence on the Serpent, he promises Man's Redemption, *I will put enmity between thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*, Gen. iii. 13.

He knew so much of God, as to know he was just and righteous, as well as great and glorious; he had all the Reason in the World to believe, that what the just and holy Majesty of God had pronounced with so much solemn Affelevation, should be fulfilled, and that he should *surely die*.

Whence

Whence then had he any Comfort? Whence did he learn that God had pitied his Misery and would not destroy him, tho' he had deserv'd it, and God had threatned it? nay, had, as we say, decreed it, tho', as it appear'd, not unalterably: The Answer is plain, it must come to him from the Mouth of God, and that is Revelation, or nothing can be so.

This we might turn upon the Adversary, and give our Work the Title of *Revelation as old as the Creation*; for as the reasoning Powers, given to Man with his Soul, were a Revelation, or Inspiration, and that the Promise of Christ upon the Fall, was a subsequent Revelation; we may well say, that Christianity, or the Knowledge of, and Faith in Christ, which is the only real and true Christianity, are as old as the Fall of Man, that is to say, as old as the Tryal and Conviction of the Three Criminals; *to wit*, the Man, the Woman, and the Devil.

Here Christ was reveal'd to *Adam*, as a Sacrifice, as if really and already offered up, and from the beginning accepted; and hence Christ is truly call'd, *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the World*, Rev. xiii. 8. This Mr. Milton represents in a most sublime Light, by the Son moving his Father in a most tender and compassionate manner, to have pity upon his weak offending Creature Man; and to spare him and lay the Weight of the Curse denounced, in case of a Fall, all upon himself; and this is happily exprest by the Apostle St. Paul, that he *was made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. And the same Text tells us how, namely, that he took the Curse denounced upon

on Man, to himself: He redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, *being, or BY being, made a Curse for us.*

I might desire my Readers to pause, or stop here awhile, and wait to hear, what in all this it was possible the utmost Wit of Man could find to cavil at, and to raise Objections upon; Nothing to me can appear more irresistible than the Truth of this Assertion; namely, that Christ was revealed from Heaven to our first Parents, as the Propitiation for their Guilt; that God had accepted him as the Mediator, the one and only Mediator between God and Man, the Man *Christ Jesus.*

This Revelation was after the Fall, not before it, therefore all the Mind and Will of God concerning Man, was not laid down fully to him before his Fall; for his Disobedience being a Fact subsequent to his Creation, it could not be; There was no Christ, no Redeemer or Redemption till there was a lapse or falling first, no Pardon is past before the Offence is committed.

It is not consistent with Reason that Christ should be revealed to *Adam* before he had transgress'd. No, no, *Adam*, in the utmost confusion of Shame and Despair, fled from the sight of his offended Creator, expecting nothing but immediate Death, according to the Terms of the Law given him; he might well say he was naked, for he was stript of his Innocence, that spotless Robe in which his Maker had at first cloathed him; and when God called him, and he was forc'd to come forth and hold up his Hand, as we might call it, what did he do? He came trembling, plead-

is from ed guilty, confest the Indictment ; but not
 g, made a word of crying for Mercy, no kneeling
 or stop down, beseeching God to forgive him ; no,
 all this but talk'd like a Fool, laid the fault upon
 n could his Wife, the Woman that thou gavest to be
 s upon; with me *she gave it me* ; and she does the same,
 fiftable and lays it upon the Devil, *the Serpent beguil-*
ed me.

I chuse to relate this in the Terms of the
 sacred Text ; because, it will for ever be to
 me the genuine History of the Fact ; whether
 in Allegory or not, is not material to the Case ;
 let the Infidels we talk of, reject the manner,
 if they please, they can never reject the sub-
 stance of the History ; namely, that the first
 Man offended God, and that by one Man, sin
 entered into the World, and Death by sin,
 and that Christ was reveal'd immediately as the
 Mediator between God and Man, to redeem
 him from the Curse, or the Man had imme-
 diately, in virtue of the Curse pronounc'd,
 been destroy'd.

As they acknowledge the Offence, they must
 acknowledge the Redemption, or they will be
 at a loss to answer this Question, Why the
 Sentence was not executed ? If they fly to
 this, which is their usual shift, *viz.* That it
 was the meer Mercy and Benignity of God ;
 we join with them in that : But then, where is
 the Immutability of his Holiness and Justice,
 who had spoken, and could not go back, *that he*
should surely die ? Certainly die ! and so he did,
 by the Son of God interposing and taking
 the stroke upon himself : So that he, by
 the Grace, that is, *the mercy* of God, might taste
 Death for every Man, *Heb. ii. 9.*

I sup-

I suppose, by this time, the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, will explain himself thus; That he means Christianity is no other Religion than the same that has been ever since the Creation; but this will not stand him in any stead, for even that way it is an Error in itself: For Christianity is the Doctrine of Salvation by a Redeemer, and at the Creation the Religion of *Adam* was the Doctrine of Righteousness upon a compleat Obedience; THIS supposes a Rectitude of the Soul, shining in perfect and spotless Innocence: That supposes the Soul polluted with Crime, under the Terror of an irretrevable Guilt, and the Weight of a dreadful Sentence; but, receiv'd to Mercy thro' the Intercession of a blessed Mediator, whose sacrifice of himself is accepted of God the offended, and the Offender is ransom'd and justify'd for his sake. This is the glorious Scheme of redeeming Grace, and the Profession of Faith, in this reveal'd Religion, is Christianity, and nothing else; so that to say, Christianity is nothing but the Religion of Reason, is a falshood, and has no Truth in it; no, nor any pretence of Truth, for it is quite another thing; and to say, it is as antient as the Creation, is likewise a falshood; because, as has been prov'd, there was a time when it was not, when the Doctrine of a Christ, or a Redeemer was *not*; that is to say, was not heard of, was not wanted, was not in the Nature of the Thing.

This being the Case, the enquiry how the Christian Doctrine came into the World, which is the necessary Consequence of the thing, introduces

roduces the present Proposition ; namely, that it was by Revelation from God, that it could be no other way ; that the Reason of Man could not have reach'd it, or by any of its most perfect exalted Operations have led Mankind to such a Discovery.

I see no way our Infidels have to come off of this ; but to turn Pagan, and with *Epicurus*, not only to deny that the first Man offended, but to deny that there was any first Man at all ; that all things ever were what they are, and ever will be just the same ; which is the Doctrine of the Eternity of the World ; a Notion too gross to deserve a reply, and too ridiculous to bring it into a Discourse so solemn and serious as this.

That there was a first beginning of all terrestrial Being, is granted by Christians, and I am not now engaged with the Platonick or Epicurean Philosophy, or Philosophers ; but with such as at least call themselves Christians, and to those I address myself thus :

If there was no Offence committed by *Adam*, or call him by what Name you will, pray then, who was the first Sinner, and when did Sin enter into the World ? For we find it is in the very Man as a Creature, twisted with his very Soul, his very Reason, which is pretended to be his Infallible Guide, is corrupted and debauch'd ; now whence is it, and how comes it to be so, and what time did it begin ? For if it was not always so, then it had a beginning ; this would be a noble Discovery, and would lead us to the Knowledge of many Things of the greatest Importance for us to know.

Nor

Nor would it be sufficient to know when Crime came first into the World. But how came it into the Man? How had this Legion Power to enter into the Herd? We find it is not only in some, but in all; it is not this or that Man, or a few Men that are wicked, but, in short, Mankind are tainted; the whole Race is touch'd with the Infirmary; Death pass'd upon all Men; for that all have sinned. How comes it to pass? it does not run in the Blood, for that is Nature; but in the Life and Spirit, in the very Soul? Whence is this general Depravity, and where did it begin?

If there was such a Golden Age, when this was not the Case, when Men were not by innate Principles addicted to Crime; when Corruption had taken no hold of Mankind; when was it, and how long did it last, and which way came the glorious State of Things to be overthrown and reduc'd, as we now see it is, to the grossest Part of the Iron Age, corrupted and deprav'd, fill'd with Violence, Fraud, Pride, Envy, distemper of the Soul, and Death?

I do not now ask them when Men did strictly obey, and sincerely adhere to the Dictates of their own Reason, tho' even that would perplex them to give an Answer to. But to bring it home to them at once, I ask, When had Reason such Powers? when did it enjoy the full and free exercise of its own Powers, if it had such, so as to guide Mankind perfectly to please his Creator, or to do all that God could expect of him? And lastly, when did our Reason lose that Power? Certainly it is not now possess'd of any such Power, but Man in the highest Exercise of his Reason, commits daily

commits daily Offences against God, and such as Reason it self will acknowledge to be such.

In a word, these Men must acknowledge a first Man, or they will be unable to find out an Original for Crime ; and especially for the Universality of Crime ; and above all, for its being, as above, gotten into the very Soul of the Creature, mixt with his Understanding, and possess'd of all his reasoning Powers, and Faculties. How comes the original Propensity to offend, and whence is it prevalent, even against the opposition, which in some Cases Reason makes against it? I leave them to reply to these things at leisure.

But suppose, tho' not granting, that according to these Men, there was no Christ, horrid suggestion ! yet such as they are not ashamed of, no Revelation from Heaven ; tho' indeed, they must give up Reason it self with that Supposition ; for, as above, 'tis evident, she has no Knowledge, how to serve or worship God, but by Revelation ; But suppose it, I say, for Argument sake, how should we, then, suggest any such thing as Mercy and Forgiveness in God, who we allow to be a righteous, holy and just Being ?

How also must we suggest, that He, who is essential Truth it self, should falsify his Word, and not make good his threatned Anger? How shall promis'd Mercy be expected, when promis'd Vengeance is not executed? What kind of a God must we make of him :

Who is so merciful, he can't be just ?

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But to return : From what Principle can we suggest that God will pardon our Offences without Repentance, without Reformation, without a Satisfaction, without a Saviour or Sacrifice ? And whence must the Notion of such Benignity in the Nature of God arise.

It is evident his Vengeance against Offenders is often declared with Terror, *the wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all unrighteousness*, Rom. i. 18. But where shall we look for his Mercy ? if the Revelation of Christ is not, if a Saviour is not, Reveal'd Mercy cannot ; for Salvation without a Saviour is utterly inconsistent with the righteous and just Nature of God ; there was no Attainment without a Sacrifice, no Sacrifice without a Priest, no Priest without an Altar, no Altar without a Mercy Seat ; the Climate is the same, and holds even from the beginning.

The first Man offended God : Death enter'd by Sin, and Death came upon all, in that all have sinned : The Contagion has reach'd the whole Race ; with this dreadful blast of Crime, the healing Breath of a promis'd Salvation came on, and Man was redeemed by an accepted Sacrifice. 'Tis strange the rational Part of this Œconomy of Mercy should not convince Men, and that their Reason should not bring them, by the force of its own Light, to acknowledge the Lustre of the Doctrine of Reconciliation : But we harden our Hearts, and shut our Eyes against our own Reason, while at the same time we would erect that very Reason as our only Guide : Preposterous Creatures ! to set up that Reason for an Idol, which refuses the Idolatry, and abhors the Crime of it ! In

In a word, all Religion is Revelation, *Adam*, in his Innocent State, had the Law and Will of his Maker reveal'd to him, internally to his Reason, and externally to his Senses, by Voice ; that is, by the Appearance of God, or an Angel of God, speaking audibly, and giving him a Law.

After his Fall he had a new Religion dictated to him, namely, that of Faith and Repentance, an offer of Mercy, and a promis'd Seed being made to him in the same manner, namely, by Voice ; and at the same time reveal'd to his Soul by the Grace and Spirit of God.

If all this was not Revelation, and that a farther and farther Revelation, which went on till Life and Immortality came to Light ; that is to say, was reveal'd by the Gospel ; I say, if it was not all Revelation, it was not at all in Fact ; and so Christ and Salvation by him, which is the only true Christianity, is nothing but a Delusion ; and, indeed they do as good as acknowledge it is so ; wretched People as they are ! God of his infinite Mercy open their Eyes, that the Light of the glorious Gospel of *Jesus Christ* may shine into their Hearts, 2 Cor. iv. 4.



C H A P. V.

That if the Revelation of all Religion is from God, it is highly just and Consonant to our Reason that it should be believ'd, and that we should be obedient to the heavenly Vision.

HAVING, I think, establish'd this Truth, that all true Religion has its rise in Revelation, and at least that the Christian Religion is thus founded: We should enquire in the next place, what we mean by this awful word Revelation, what it is, and from whence the things that are thus reveal'd do proceed.

Now to do this, in a summary way, yet so as may stand its ground against the gainsayers of the Age, I shall explain the word Revelation, not in its literal or grammatical Acceptation, but as it is ordinarily understood by even our Opponents in this Dispute; namely, the written Word, which we call, and that rightly too, *the Word of God*, or the Scriptures; as being the Word by which God has reveal'd his Mind and Will to Men, and wherein he has laid them down a rule of Life and Doctrine, which if they follow, they may expect all the Blessings promis'd therein.

The Essence and Substance of this written Word is summ'd up in this, (*viz.*) That it is the *everlasting Gospel* reveal'd from Heaven, preach'd to Mankind by the Son of God himself,

self, and confirm'd to us by them that heard him, *God also bearing them witness by signs and wonders, and divers miracles and Gift of the Holy Ghost, according to his Will, Heb. ii. 4.*

If these Men demand of us, how we know this Scripture is the Word and Will of God, and how we know the Revelation is from him? I answer in the like summary way; but let them confute it if they can; *because it has discovered (that is, Revealed) those things to Man which none but God could know*; of this the number of Instances are too great to need any mention; but the whole Tenour of the Old Testament Prophecies and Promises are full of them; and the whole body of the New Testament History, is a Testimonial of their being punctually fulfill'd.

The Demonstrations of this Truth, and the Discoveries of God, of which every part of the Scripture is full, would take up not a Chapter, but a Volume to repeat; I leave it upon the Affirmative above-mention'd, which I undertake to support against all the Cavils of the Age, be they as great as they will.

Supposing it then capable of such support, which it must be, till what I have here alledged is confuted; I infer in the words of the blessed Apostle, 1 Tim. i. 15. *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.*

In a word, if the Christian Religion is a Revelation, and is from God, let us see the Man that can be so audacious, as to say, *it ought not to be receiv'd*, to be embrac'd with the highest Veneration, and believ'd with the utmost Sincerity and Resignation? Can they own it to be the word of God, and not be-

lieve it ! 'tis a preposterous Boldness ! it arms Heaven and Earth against them, and sets Conscience and Reason in a perfect Flame.

It is far from a Confutation of this Fundamental, to say, there are some Difficulties in the reading, seeming Contradictions, wrong Translations, Errors in the Copies, and the like ; let them come to the Point, let them recognize that which is plain, congruous, undeniable, and against which no such Objection lies, and they will find enough of that to command their Awe, and to establish the Reverence of God and Religion in their Minds ; they will find the very Image of God stamp'd upon every part of it, all its Commands come with a visible Signature of the Divine Authority ; they establish Virtue, Piety, Meekness, Humility, and Self-denial ; they exalt every generous and beneficent Principle ; they attract Reverence to the Being which has created us, and direct in what manner to serve and honour him, so as to be accepted by him, and to be made for ever happy with him.

They discourage every Vice, every thing that is in the least disagreeable to the Laws of Reason, to the Good of human Society, or repugnant to the strictest Honour and Truth ; they condemn every thing that is evil, unworthy of the Man as a rational Creature, or unworthy of God, the Giver of his Being, and end of his Life.

If it were the word of a Man, the Failings and Imperfections of human Nature, would some where or other appear ; whereas here is nothing but a most righteous Law, a most perfect Rule, and all leading to the most
happy

happy End : if it were the word of a Man, it would bewray its Author by its Imperfections, and might, for that Reason above, be doubted ; but as it is from God, its whole Tenour is like its Author, one body of uniform Truth, every where directing to the best End, by the most direct and infallible means, a Testimony of its proceeding from the Mouth of him, who is himself the essential Light of Truth, the GOD of TRUTH, yea TRUTH it self.

Whatever is spoken with such an Authority, ought to be believ'd, as whatever is commanded by him that is himself essential Truth, ought to be submitted to and obey'd.

This being laid down as a Proposition, and I believe it is receiv'd as such, it follows then, at least, that the Evidence of Scripture be receiv'd ; that is, that the Testimony of Scripture be admitted in Evidence on the Trial of the Cases before us, (*viz.*) That the Scripture History, which is so evidently confirm'd by the Voice of God, and so frequently quoted and referr'd to, even by Christ himself, should be believ'd as Authentic ; its Authority allow'd, the Facts it relates and attests admitted to be True, and receiv'd as such.

It farther infers, that all the Scripture Prophecies, especially such as we find have had their Accomplishment in the Gospel Times, and are apparently fulfill'd, should be acknowledged, as so many glorious Testimonials, or Certificates, to the Verity of the ancient Revelation, and the Preachings of inspir'd Men in all Ages.

What a wonderful Concurrence of Circumstance do we meet with in Scripture, in the things predicted, and the things fulfill'd ; it would fill a Volume to remark how the promis'd Deliverances arriv'd to a Day, at the distance of many hundred Years, and the threatned Judgments, with the same exactness, the self-same Day, says the Text : Threatned Deluge, long before it came ; and when it was near, 'tis said, yet seven Days, *and I will cause it to rain, &c.* Gen. vii. 4. The low Condition, and Captivity of the *Israelites*, expressly stated to a Day, and their Deliverance, as above, fixt and perform'd to that very appointed Day. The casting down *Jeroboam's* Altar, and polluting it, by burning the Bones of Men upon it ; how circumstantially was it predicted, even to the Name of the King that should perform it (*Josiah* by Name) and how exactly was it fulfill'd ; the destruction of *Jerusalem*, and the captivity in *Babylon*, the time of it, the continuance of it, (*viz.*) 70 Years, the return from it, the glory of the second Temple, the coming of the MESSIAH into that Temple, and at last the final Destruction of it, and the scattering the whole Nation ; how were they exactly foretold, and all that was foretold, most exactly fulfill'd ?

If this can be done by the hand of Man, or by any human Art, I would gladly hear some Examples of the kind, and some intimation of any Person who ever pretended to it : Even the Devil, whose Power of Prediction, some have suggested to be great, tho' Reason dictates, that there is nothing of that kind in his Power, could not reach to
these

these wonderful things, nor to any thing like them.

I omit abundance of other Prophecies, and prophetic Visions, of which the several Books of *Daniel*, *Ezekiel*, and others, are full, and in which the several Revolutions of Empires and Monarchies in the World are so exactly foretold, many of which are already fulfill'd, and others, yet behind, are in a fair prospect of being fulfill'd, concluding it all with this particular Observation, (*viz.*) That where an appointed time, for the fulfilling of any one Prediction in Scripture is precisely set down, they cannot give one Example where that time has elaps'd, without a fulfilling of the thing predicted.

Are not these Marks of a Divine Impression? Are not these eminent Signatures of the high Original of the Scriptures, and sufficient to satisfy any reasonable Inquirer? and if they are such, they must necessarily command our belief of its Contents.

The sum of this whole Discourse may then be contained in these few Generals.

1. The first Impressions of religious Knowledge on the Minds of Men, were by the secret Operation of God revealing himself to the Soul.
2. *Christianity*, or the Religion of *JESUS*, which tho' not as antient as the Creation, is yet as old as the Sentence past upon the Fall of Man, is a farther Revelation of God to Man, deliver'd to him vocally in Paradise, before his being expell'd from thence.

3. *This*

3. *This farther Revelation*; namely, the Revelation of a Redemption by a promis'd Saviour, which is *Christianity*, being audibly deliver'd to the first Man, from God himself, is therefore not unworthy of God, or inconsistent with the Holiness, Goodness, and unchangeable Perfections of his Being; if it had, he would not have made such a farther Revelation, and if one subsequent Revelation, was not unworthy of God, inconsistent or incredible, then other, and farther Revelations of his Mind and Will to Man, may be equally worthy, consistent, and to be believ'd, as coming from himself.
4. *The Scripture* is a farther and continued Revelation of the Mind and Will of God; is a perfect rule of Life to Man, and for his Guidance in serving and worshipping God, in order to his own eternal Felicity, and may be therefore worthy of God, and consistent with all his unchangeable Perfections.

These things being laid down as Fundamentals, it follows, that full Credit is to be given to this subsequent Revelation, and the whole Scripture is to be receiv'd with a due Veneration, and an intire Credence; it is to be believ'd as a written Word inspir'd from God, and that as such, is really the word of God, and contains so much of his Mind and Will concerning us, as is sufficient for our Eternal Salvation. In a word, according to what is quoted above from the blessed Apostle St. Paul,

if

if it is a faithful saying, it is worthy of all acceptation, 1 Tim. i. 13.

The Opposers of these Truths, cannot avoid the force of this reasoning, (*viz.*) That if the Scripture is the word of God, it ought to be believ'd; and therefore they turn back upon the Scripture itself, and raise Cavils at the Text, that they may avoid the Consequence.

On the other hand, to come a little closer to these Men, in this particular part, (*viz.*) their disputing the Veracity of the Scripture, it must be said of them, that they show a dreadful Indifference in things of the utmost weight and consequence, even to themselves.

For suppose, *as we may well do*, that the Scripture should be the word of God, and that it is a real Revelation of his *Mind* and *Will*; what Condition will these Men find themselves in then? and thus far is a certain Truth, and I think they will not dispute it, (*viz.*) that they are not sure of the Negative; nay, I will venture to go farther, the Affirmative is reasonable, the Negative only presumptive; that it is so, is probable; that it is not so is doubtful; and on which side lies the hazard? either there is no danger in the Negative, or these Men are unaccountably negligent of themselves, and strangely quiet and tranquil in the greatest imaginable Risque.

I am not ignorant of the innumerable Cavils and Scruples they raise daily to support their Infidelity, and to buoy themselves in their opposition to the Divine Authority of the sacred Text: I think they need no reply in this place, let them first get over what I have insisted on here; namely, of their revealing

vealing or discovering such things, which none but God could know, and their Cavils may be encountred afterwards; let them tell us, what human Prescience could foretel things so remote in Time, so particular in Circumstance, as the Scripture does, and which have so critically been fulfill'd; let them give the least rational Account of any other Power, from Earth or Hell, that could do this, and we may give up some Points to them.

The Books of the Sybils, the Oracles of the Heathen, the Conjurations of the Magicians: What were they all? And how often did they fail in their Predictions? But here they cannot assign one Mistake, one false Prediction, not one jot or tittle of this word has fail'd; not one word has fallen to the ground, and Heaven and Earth shall pass away, e'er one word of it shall fail; to what End do Men strain their Wits to find flaws in the Translation, and to form Objections, and seeming Contradictions in the several Versions, while they cannot undermine or destroy the Foundation?

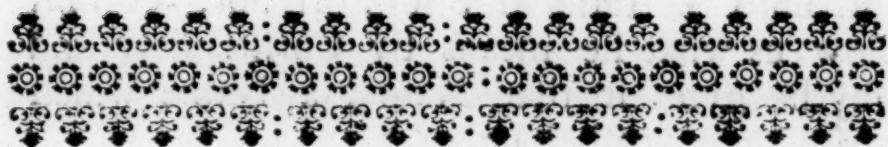
The Reasonableness of a farther Revelation; nay, the Necessity of it, has a Sanction from the plain Fact; namely, that the first progressive Revelation was pronounc'd from the Mouth of God; if they deny this, they must deny the first Promise of a *Messiah*; nay, the *Messiah* himself; and yet this Author talks of a Religion call'd Christianity, as if there could be any Christianity without a Christ; if then, he will own any such thing as a Christianity, he must own, as above, that it was a Revelation from the Mouth of God, subsequent

quent to the first Revelation of God, in, and unto the rational Soul : If not, let him show us what he means by Christianity, and why he gives it that Name, a Name which really does not belong to it.

That there may be Abuses and Corruptions of reveal'd Religion, I shall not dispute, nor are those Abuses and Corruptions any way our concern in this present Debate ; let the Reverence due to the Revelation itself, be first establish'd, and the main point granted, that it is from God, all the mistakes about it, or about our own Conduct, on that Account, may be debated afterward. While the Reason of Man is fallible, and his Judgment corrupt, Mistakes will follow, and Man will err ; but this is no Impeachment of the Wisdom of God, in giving a farther Revelation, but rather, on the contrary, shews the necessity of it.

Thus far, I think, all the tedious and formal Schemes, of what we would have called rational Religion, are answer'd at once, and the Antiquity of Christianity is settled, as also, that Christianity itself, is a Revelation, and that a farther and subsequent Revelation being since the Fall of Man, and since the Degeneracy of his reasoning Powers, which appear every day deficient and unable to preserve him from offending, and much more unable to make reparation for the Offence committed.

C H A P.



C H A P. VI.

An Enquiry into the End and Design of all the Cavils which are made at, and the Warmth that is exerted against reveal'd Religion, and whether they tend to make Men more Religious, or less.

ONE of the best Testimonies, to the Goodness of any Profession, is, that it has a direct Tendency to make Men better : I shall always suspect the Truth of that Opinion, or of that Religion, which makes Men worse, and not better ; a holy Life is the rational Consequence of a holy Religion, and of a sincere Profession of it.

If it could be made appear, that these Cavils about Religion, and these Doubts about the Truth of Revelation, had a suitable effect upon the lives of Men, and that those who made these Objections, were made better by the Enquiry, if it tended to make them more serious, and more religious, we might be a little prejudic'd in their Favour ; but if, on the contrary, these suggestions have a tendency to make Men less religious, less pious, and less earnest after the felicity of a future State, it argues strongly against them, that they are not in a right pursuit of the thing
itself ;

itself ; that they act upon a wrong Foundation, in which they meet with no Blessing.

How mean, how wretched a View is it, that those People act from, in an Affair of this Consequence, whose end is popularity and applause? who dare blaspheme God, and make a mock of things sacred, to be talk'd up among Men, and to pass for something extraordinary? Sure such Men cast off all Religion at once.

We are told, the *Religion of Nature*, that is to say, of *Reason*, consists in observing those things, which our Reason, by considering the Nature of God and Man, and the relation we stand in to him, and to one another, demonstrates to be our Duty.

This is a strange Jargon of Words, without much real signification; for how should our Reason consider the Nature of God, and the relation we stand in to him, without the help of some Revelation, some secret Light shining into it from God, to discover himself to the Man? But, let it stand as it is, and let us go on with it thus; the *Religion of Reason* consists in observing, &c. but what if the culpable Man, with all the Light of his Reason, does not, or has not observ'd these things, which Reason demonstrates to be his Duty, what do all the fine things these Men say of God, tend to as that he is a Being absolutely perfect, and infinitely happy in himself; that he did not create Man for his own sake, or command them any thing for his own interest or advantage, or to no end or purpose, nor for any thing but for their own good, and the like; what, I say, do they all amount
to

to but this, that God, who is infinitely happy in himself, is not better'd by our Obedience, nor does he stand in need of our Services, all which, we most readily allow.

But what is all this to our Rebellion and Disobedience? Does this prove that God cannot resent, that 'tis below him to be angry; that he is so good that he can't be just, that he is not a jealous God, visiting his Creatures, and afflicting them for their Offences? I see not one word of Divine Justice, but God is so good a Being, that he is above all anger or resentment, can do himself no Justice upon the most impious Offender, and yet how many dreadful Testimonies has God given in the World of his Anger and Vengeance against crying Offences?

How does he often testify his abhorrence of the Criminal, as well as of the Crime, and snatch Men immediately from Life, in the very act of offending him? as if to tell us, that he takes them into his own hand, to punish them farther as they deserve.

I have often observ'd how glorious a Testimony the God of Heaven and Earth gives, to those humble Souls that fear and serve him; that he is able to hear their Prayers, and what an encouragement it is to every Christian that prays to him; that we often find him hearing the horrid Blasphemies of his hardned Enemies, and as it were, obeying the Voice of their loud Imprecations, when they call upon him to destroy them, and letting that Vengeance loose, which they impiously provoke to fall upon them.

Every

Every Age is full of Examples sufficient to make a Deist tremble, if not too much hardened, when Divine Justice has struck dead the perjur'd Wretches that have call'd God to witness to a Lye. How eminent is the ordinary Method of his Justice in pursuing the Murderer, often bringing him even to detect himself, and be the Instrument of his own just Punishment?

It is impossible these Men should resist the open Discoveries of Divine Vengeance upon desperate Criminals, and how it is so pointed, and so tim'd, that we have frequent Examples, where the Crime has been seen in the very Punishment; and yet all this even by our own Reason, perfectly reconcilable to the Goodness and Benignity of God, and in the highest degree magnifies his Mercy, in that he does not oftner, or always, vindicate his Holiness in the same manner.

How do these Men lay a snare for their own Souls, as well as for the Souls of their weaker Brethren, by pretending to exalt the Mercy and Goodness of God, in bar of his Holiness, and plead his infinite Goodness in arrest of Judgment, for the most flagrant Offences? Is this a rational Religion! Can Reason suggest, that because God is good, that therefore we may act as we please, and that he will not take Vengeance upon us, if we sin against him, because he is good? As if God could not reconcile his Goodness with his detestation of Crime, and make all his Attributes conform together, without the least Contradiction; to what height of Impiety must such Notions lead the World? And how do they evi-

dently tend to take away all that, which we justly call the Fear of God, out of the Minds of Men?

Their new Doctrines, of following the dictates of Reason, as the Guide of the Soul, are so far from making the World better, that it is too evident they make it worse; for it gives them a loose in all manner of Levities, and even of the worst of Vices, thro' the Error of their debauch'd Reasonings; not allowing that their Reason may be, and is often, darkned, if not entirely blinded, by the rage of Appetite, and that they are hurried down the stream of their Affections and Passions, in spite of whatever opposition their reasoning Powers are able to make.

Could they, indeed, advance, that their Reason was never misguided, never corrupted; cou'd they suggest that their WILLS always submitted to their UNDERSTANDINGS, that is to say, to their Reason, and the last was so steady a Rule of Life, that they either could not, or did not err; something might be said in their favour; but then such an Opinion must be supported by the proofs of Fact, and they must be able to appeal to their constant behaviour and conduct in Life; in which if all these concurred, they certainly would be the most blameless and upright Generation that the World ever saw.

But does this appear, is there any such thing to be seen among them? They tell us, they may answer all the great ends of Life, and all that God expects from them, if they do but pursue the Measures which their own Reason dictates; but where is the Man that
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does thus pursue the dictates of his Reason? Where the exactness of Conduct which might be expected from them, and what do they say about their slips and mistakes? They have not one word in all their rational System of what they are to do, or what they are to expect God will do, upon the many gross, foul, Affronts offer'd both to him their Maker, and to their own Reason, which was to be their Guide.

Repentance is not so much as nam'd among them; and as for a Sacrifice or Propitiation, 'tis all a Mockery, and mock'd at in all the rational Schemes they lay down; and yet they go on to Trespass, go on to Affront the Majesty of God, and insult his Goodness, and that with all the Tranquility imaginable; these things are so inconsistent with the very Notion of Religion in general, as well as with the Pretences they make to a rectitude of Soul, that I cannot see how they can reconcile them.

Certainly, that Religion which has a real Tendency to make the World worse, and not better, cannot claim to be the best, and truest Religion: A holy exact humble Life is the Consequence of a true Religion, and the Christian Religion boasts of its singularity, in recommending such Principles to mankind, more than any other Religion. *He that has this hope in him, purifies himself, even as God is pure, 1 John iii. 3.* Let it come to the Test, do the Deists or the Christians purify themselves most, after the sacred Pattern; who live the most exact Lives, who walk by the best Rule?

We are told, that to entertain Notions of God, as an offended angry Judge, is to take away our love of God, and by our fear to bring ourselves to hate him ; but this is an extreme which I see no necessity of our running into at all, and it is much more rational to suggest, that to suppose the goodness of God so to swallow up his Attribute of Justice, that the most obstinate Rebellion cannot move him to resent, is not only arguing against Reason, but against the experience of all Ages, wherein Testimonies of Divine Vengeance has been given, too apparent to be deny'd, and yet without Impeachment of the infinite Goodness, so essential to the Being of a God ; and I think both these Attributes so consistent with the Being and Perfection of God, that the harmony of them is the most beautiful Contemplation in the World.

To deny the Justice of God, in vindication of his Mercy, is to make them absolutely repugnant to one another, which it is evident from numberless Examples, are reconcil'd in the whole Tenour of the Government of Providence in the World ; and this may, indeed, serve for a full Answer to a whole Volume, swell'd with flourishes upon the Goodness and Beneficence of God, and telling us, that all thoughts of his Anger and Resentment, be the Cause ever so great, are unworthy of God.

The Question seems to be fully answer'd, by demonstration of Fact, against which it is to no purpose to argue: Has the Wrath of God been reveal'd from Heaven, or has it not? And has it been evidently so reveal'd, against
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the unrighteousness of Men, or has it not? If it has, God has certainly reconcil'd his Vengeance and his Mercy, and by causing them to move in their several and respective Spheres, has made them consistent with one another, whether we can reconcile our thoughts of them or no.

If Men will dare to offend on the Presumption, that God is so good that he cannot resent, I think that Presumption detracts more from God, than any other false Notion of God can do; particularly as it tends to raze out the fear of God from the Minds of Men, and leave every Man to walk in his own Ways, being a Rule to himself; For if the Goodness and Beneficence of God is such, so incomprehensibly great, that he will take no notice of our Offences; nay, not of the vilest Contempt which we can offer to his most righteous Laws; what Inference is more rational than this, that then every Man may live as he pleases? As when there was no King in *Israel*, every Man did what was right in his own Eyes, so when we can perswade our selves, that there are no Thunders in Heaven, no Vengeance to be fear'd from thence, we shall all do the like.

Nor is the Case without Testimony in the daily Practice of the Age; who are more profligate and more prophane, who lead more vicious Lives, and practise all manner of odious Crimes, than the Patrons of these Deistic Notions? How do they argue a full liberty in Crime, from the Benignity of Heaven, and the original Goodness of God, who can never be supposed to be angry with his Creatures, for gratifying those Affections and Pas-

sions, which he has plac'd in them : Nay, we find them arguing that he approves of all their wild Extravagances ; because he does not immediately let fly his Anger, so the Mercy of God is abused and improv'd, to the support of Vice ; and thus we find it was of old, *Pf. l. 21. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence : thou thoughtest, that I was altogether such a one as thy self : but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine Eyes.* I think I cannot close this Work better than by adding what the Holy Ghost says by the Royal Psalmist, in the very next verse to that quoted above, viz. *Pfalm l. 22. Consider this, ye that forget God, least I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*



APPENDIX;

*Affectionately address'd to the Youth of this Age,
to prevent, if possible, their being early debauch'd
with Atheistic and Deistic Principles.*

HE must have no Compassion for the Souls of Men, and no Concern for the eternal Welfare of his Fellow-Creatures, who can be a silent and unmoved Spectator of the unhappy State of Religion at this time among us.

Innumerable Schisms and Divisions, Sects and Opinions, have for many Years torn and rent the Church of Christ, in a manner justly to be lamented; and I cannot without Grief reflect on what I have both heard and read, from the Mouths and Pens of some of the most learned, pious, and zealous Ministers of this Protestant Church, of their just Fears, that the Divisions and Breaches in Religion, the Immorality of its Professors, and the Decay of the ancient Zeal for God, which was once the Glory of the Reformation, would at last open a door for such Errors, and give such a loose to the Lusts of Men, as, without the infinite Mercy of God interposing to prevent it, would overthrow the Establishment of Religion among us, and in the end ruin the Reformation it self.

We seem to be arriv'd at the unhappy time; we see Divisions in Opinion, Separations in Religious Worship, Errors in Doctrine, and

Breaches in Christian Charity, have broken in upon the Practice of Christians of almost all Denominations; and we have so mangled Religion it self, smother'd it with Errors, and torn it with our Passions and Prejudices, that it is as it were lost among us, at least it seems to be withdrawn from our Sight.

The Fear of God, which is the beginning of all Religious Wisdom, is rejected, the Terror of *his Anger* is lost, and the Edge of his Sword taken off, by our advancing new Notions of his Being and Attributes; erecting his Goodness, not only above all his Name, but upon the Ruin of it; divesting him not only of all Resentment, but even of his Justice and Holiness; and supposing that because he does not, therefore he cannot strike; that he may be insulted, rebelled against, nay even deny'd and contemn'd, and yet that he is so infinitely good, he cannot be provok'd, and that he can only pity the Criminal not punish him.

I address this to the young People, the rising Generation of this Day; because as these horrid Notions of a God are craftily calculated by the harden'd, because unpunish'd, Offenders of the declining Age, for the pleasing and gratifying the youthful Inclinations, and most early Appetite of the growing Age, they have a greater occasion of timely Cautions, and the most earnest Remonstrances against being drawn in, to the Ruin of their Souls.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. They are the Words of the blessed Apostle St. Paul, 2 Cor. v. 11, whose Affection for the Souls of Men was so very remarkable, and his Success in persuading them
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so great, that he converted thousands from the grossest heathen Idolatries and Errors of Paganism, to the Faith of a crucified Jesus, and established the most flourishing Churches that ever were in the World.

We take his Rule to perswade and exhort, and, if you please, from his own Mouth to direct, and the Direction is short; *search the Scriptures, and see there, with the noble Berozar, whether these things are so.*

The Broachers of the Deistic Notions, which delude so many young Gentlemen, and encourage them at this time in their total Neglect of all Religion, oppose this with all their skill; they knew very well, that they could build up nothing if they could not pull down the Scripture; but *the Foundation of God standeth sure.* We trust this is a Building which is of God, and shall for ever stand: Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but not one Tittle of *his Word* shall fall to the Ground; it is establish'd upon the Truth of that Being who is essential Truth it self, and is as surely his Word, as that there is a Heaven or an Earth, and as there is a Soul in Man.

At least be pleas'd to look back to what has been said in this Work to prove it, and observe that you cannot be certain it is not so, and if the Affirmative should prove really true, how fatal will your Mistake be?

*If it should so fall out, as who can tell,
But there may be a GOD, a HEAVEN, and HELL,
Mankind had best consider well, for Fear
'T should be too late when their Mistakes appear.*

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I appeal to general and common Understandings, whether it is a Matter to be cold and indifferent about, whether the Uncertainty is fit to be rested in, and to be easy under, whether the Consequence is not of Importance, and that sufficient to command your Attention?

To persuade you that there is a God, and that he cannot be just, that he is the Governour of the World, and yet that you may act according to the Gust of your own Desires, without regard either to his Negative or Positive Commands; or rather that he has given you no Commands no Rules to walk by, but your own corrupted Reason, which is all one as to say, that he has set no Land-Marks upon your Conduct, no Bounds to your vilest Affections, prohibited nothing, and resents nothing; is this possible to reach your Understandings? is it not contrary to the Holiness and Righteousness of an infinitely pure Being? Is it not repugnant to all the Principles of Government that have been learnt in the World? is it not repugnant to the very common Good of his Creatures? does not Reason shew it self too weak to be the sole Director of Mankind? does it not frequently stand still, nay perhaps sleep, while the worst of Crimes, taking the Reins of Government out of Reason's Hand, influences Mankind to ruin Kingdoms, destroy Nations, shed Rivers or rather Seas of Blood, and to practise all manner of publick and private Injuries?

How shall we reconcile these things to the Government of Reason! and how shall we reconcile the approving or not resenting these constant Injuries, Injustice, and Oppressions, to the Goodness of an infinitely gracious, clement,

ment, and beneficent Being? For God's sake, and for your own sakes, think again of these things, and you will soon be convinc'd, that certainly the righteous Hand of God, without the least Impeachment of his Goodness, is stretch'd out against such things, and does reach the Heads of the Oppressors, either in this World or in another; indeed the Retribution not being always visible to us, and our prejudic'd Minds being eager to take all Advantages to support the wicked Insinuations of Error, we are apt to suggest that Heaven takes no notice of such things? and to take a liberty, in our little Spheres, to do the like; according to that well known Text, *Ecel. viii. 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do Evil.*

But on the contrary, as the speedy Execution of Divine Justice, which is frequently exerted upon an evil Work, and upon the Workers of it also, is an undeniable Testimony of the Being of the Hand that executes it; so the Delay of that same Justice, which sometimes also happens, is as clear a Testimony of the Reality of a Future State and Judgment, and both are worth our Consideration; for if it was not a righteous Judge who acted in the *first Case*, the Blow would not have been given at all; and if it be a righteous Judge then, *in the second Case*, the Blow certainly remains to be given, and will fall, if not in this State in some other, that we cannot yet describe.

I need not look into History for Examples where the vindictive Attribute of God, I mean his Anger and Vengeance against wicked Men, has

has been evidently stretched out in this Life, and when they have been punished in an awful and terrible manner; such things are recent in our Memory upon many sad Occasions: How can we then pretend that it is unworthy of God to resent the crying Sins of his Creatures? On the contrary, it would be repugnant to his Justice and Holiness not to do it.

In the next place, let those who incline to these Opinions, consider the Danger of running things up to such a dreadful Extremity; *who ever hardened himself against him and has prospered?* Will any thinking Man venture to offend, because he thinks God will not punish, when there are Examples before his Eyes where God has punish'd, and has let loose his Anger upon others, and perhaps such as have been Offenders of a lower Degree than him that now presumes? are empty Notions and Suggestions sufficient to support the Mind against visible Testimonies of Fact?

Are not the daily Examples of the righteous Judgment of God, better Evidences of the Affirmative, than bare Suggestions of what *may be*, and as well *may not be*, are of the Negative? What think you of the Singularity of the vindictive Attribute, in so eminently pursuing the Guilt of Blood and bringing Murderers to Justice? let it stand as a single Mark of the divine Vengeance, having not room to enlarge upon the many terrible Examples of other kinds which happen almost daily in our View. How does Hell haunt the guilty Soul, that he has no Rest Night or Day, till he even detects himself, and recognizes the divine Stroke of Justice in his own Destruction.

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What shall we say to Publick Judgments by which God is pleased even to lay waste Nations, and unpeople whole Cities, nay Provinces, and Kingdoms? are they not Strokes of his Vengeance? if not why does not Almighty Sovereign Goodness interpose, to prevent those Calamities, and save his Creatures, for whom it is so eminently concern'd, and for whose Good all the Divine Attributes are so constantly employed?

Would the merciful God of Heaven, who is all Goodness and Beneficence, Pity, and Affection, to his Creatures, suffer them to be swept away in a Pestilence by thousands, as by an overflowing Stream; and that even while they are on their Knees supplicating his infinite Goodness to spare them, if he did not think fit thus to testify his Resentment for their Offences, and to punish them for both their National and Personal Crimes? Can it be reconciled to his infinite Clemency, to desolate so many flourishing Kingdoms and Cities by War, Fire, Water, and other secondary Causes, which the Hand of his Goodness could easily restrain, if his Justice did not let them loose as Instruments of his Vengeance? How are Elements sometimes as it were armed against us? To day furious Lightnings destroy Men above Ground; to morrow terrible Earthquakes, bring subterraneous Judgments from below; to day violent Storms and Tempests overturn Cities and Towns; to morrow, dreadful Floods and Inundations of Rivers and Seas, sweep away thousands, and drown the whole Country: One while Rain is withheld, and the Earth is burnt up with Drought; another Season the
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Fruits of the Earth are destroy'd by continued and immoderate Rains.

To say these things have all their Causes in Order of Nature, and may be accounted for, is to say nothing; because, as you must acknowledge, the Power of God is infinitely able to restrain these Elements, and keep them from destroying his Creatures; where is his Almighty Sovereign Goodness, which is so exalted by this Principle of Deism, that it does not interpose to save his beloved Creatures? Why sleeps his protecting Providence, while the World is as it were brought to the Brink of the Precipice, and while his Creatures are perishing even within the Reach of his Pity?

Doubtless the Anger of God with-holds his Mercy on such Occasions as these, and he is punishing Men for their Transgressions, or else his Goodness would never suffer them to be thus overwhelmed with Ruin before his Face, while they had done nothing to provoke his Anger.

It is Impossible to reconcile these publick Devastations, to the Goodness and Mercy of a being infinitely able to prevent them, if there were not Reasons to be drawn from his just Anger *against the Sins of Men, to account for them.*

Let these things be placed in the Balance, against all these modern Delusions; if the Soul is of Importance enough to move your Consideration, weigh them a little one against the other, and judge for yourselves whether it be consistent with your Reason, that while you believe there is a God, infinite, incomprehensible, and eternal, you can conceive so grossly of him as that he will make no Difference between the Righteous and the Wicked; that he will not
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distinguish the Wise, and Sober, the Just, and Upright, from the Profligate, the Vile, the Corrupt, and loose Livers; I say judge for your selves; let even that very Reason which you erect thus on the Throne of God judge for you, after which there is no more to be offered to you but this, with which I shall conclude.

Be a little Wary and Cautious; sit down sometimes and think what you are doing. Take heed how you make God your Jest, *how you mock at his Judgments*, and cast his Fear behind your Back; least his Hand fall heavy upon you, least you come to recognize his Vengeance in your own Destruction, and implore his Mercy when it may be too late.

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